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Fernando Cortes and the conquest of Mexico, 1485-1547

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Fernando Cortes and the conquest of Mexico, 1485-1547

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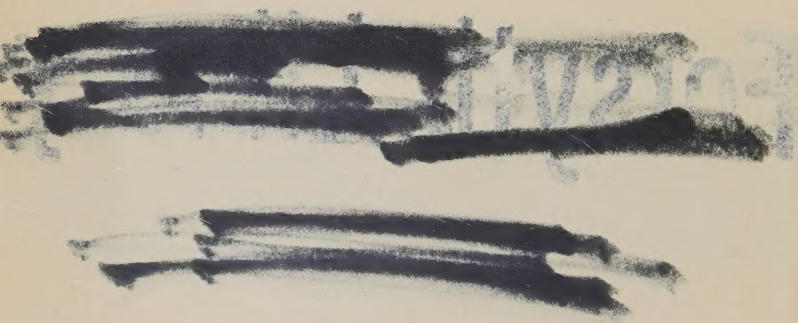
FACTA DUCIS VIVENT, OPEROSAQUE
GLORIA RERUM——OVID, IN LIVIAM, 255.
THE HERO'S DEEDS AND HARD-WON
FAME SHALL LIVE.

WITHDRAWN

FERNANDO CORTES



PORTRAIT OF CORTES

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY FERDIN SELMA AFTER THE PAINTING BY TITIAN

FERNANDO CORTES

AND THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO

1485-1547

BY

FRANCIS AUGUSTUS MACNUTT

TRANSLATOR AND EDITOR OF THE "LETTERS OF CORTES," AUTHOR OF "BARTHOLOMEW DE LAS CASAS, HIS LIFE, HIS APOSTOLATE, AND HIS WRITINGS"

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1909

972.02
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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

To

KENELM VAUGHAN

IN MEMORY OF OUR MANY HAPPY DAYS TOGETHER IN OLD AND NEW SPAIN, THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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fied the political ethics of his age and, though condemned by the Church and repudiated by moralists, his philosophy of crime was adopted by statesmen whose personal characters command respect. *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi* exhibit the standards by which the conduct of public men was governed, and the moral sense of sovereigns and their counsellors had become so perverted that, while still punishing individual delinquents, they had worked out for their own guidance, a complete system of government by assassination.

Fernando Cortes was untainted by the cynical paganism of the Italian Renaissance and had probably never read a line of Macchiavelli, nor had he been trained in his school of political ethics, but he was essentially a man of his times. Orthodox and absolute as were his religious beliefs, the intermittent character of their influence on his moral conduct is but too obvious, but, though he failed to live according to the precepts of his religion, nobody can doubt that he would have died in defence of it. Indifferent to obstacles, he faced the dangers and consequences of undertakings that could have courted none save an imperial spirit. His ambition was restrained by a single fetter—his loyalty; the unanswerable refutation of the oft-repeated accusation that he aspired to independence, is the fact that he did not assume the independent sovereignty and royal crown

stances that developed his latent powers, the motives that directed his actions, and the means he used to achieve his ends. In so doing, I am not aware of having glossed over or condoned either the regrettable flaws in his private morals, or the several acts of duplicity and excessive cruelty which so seriously detract from the admiration his great achievements would otherwise unreservedly command. Both his methods and his motives were vigorously attacked by his contemporary adversaries, and almost every known crime, from assassination to high treason, was imputed to him. Unsubstantiated and mendacious for the most part, the specific accusations of high crimes were, and they may be dismissed. They were successfully refuted during his life-time, and the permanently beneficent results secured to humanity by his conquests, remain forever beyond the boundaries of the historically debatable.

Les grands desseins et notables entreprises ne se verifient jamais autrement que par le succés. The maxim is Cardinal Richelieu's, and its sense was more briefly expressed by Napoleon: *Je ne juge les hommes que par les résultats.*

Although the religious influences, prevalent in Europe during the Middle Ages, began in the sixteenth century to show signs of decline, governments still assumed the guardianship of religious unity in the State. Macchiavelli codi-

CORTES

FROM THE PORTRAIT IN THE JESUS HOSPITAL IN THE CITY OF MEXICO

fied the political ethics of his age and, though condemned by the Church and repudiated by moralists, his philosophy of crime was adopted by statesmen whose personal characters command respect. *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi* exhibit the standards by which the conduct of public men was governed, and the moral sense of sovereigns and their counsellors had become so perverted that, while still punishing individual delinquents, they had worked out for their own guidance, a complete system of government by assassination.

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that were his to take in Mexico. There was, as yet, no adequate comprehension in Spain of the importance of the newly discovered country; its extent, its resources, and even its whereabouts, were first reported by Cortes himself in his letters to Charles V., whose attention was absorbed by pressing affairs in Germany and Italy. The long Italian wars that ended with the capture of Francis I. at Pavia were followed by the campaign against Rome, in which His Most Catholic Majesty employed Lutheran *Lanzknechts* to sack the papal capital in 1527, while during all this period, the rising tide of the Reformation engrossed the Emperor's attention to the exclusion of conquests in a distant hemisphere, by an unknown soldier of fortune.

Twenty-five years had elapsed since the discovery of a group of islands in the Western ocean had brought disillusion and disappointment to Spain; it was the conquest of Mexico by Cortes that first made known the importance of the New World and brought America within the sphere of European politics. His was the original conception of a colonial empire, and the plans and proposals for the extension of Spanish supremacy, outlined in his letters to the Emperor, were worthy of more attention than they received.

After his thinly veiled defiance of Diego Velasquez, the sailing of the fleet from Cuba

was a leap into the void. Montezuma's embassy, bearing rich gifts, disclosed the possibilities of the *Hinterland* and germinated in the brain of Cortes the idea of conquest. One revelation was confirmed by another and, as the evidences of Aztec wealth multiplied, the proofs of internal disaffection throughout the empire stimulated the confidence of the brooding conqueror. Disloyalty amongst the Totonacs, treachery that only awaited an opportunity in Texcoco, an ancient tradition of hate in Tlascala, and the superstition that obscured the judgment and paralysed the action of the despotic ruler—these were the materials from which the astute invader evolved the machinery for his conquest. Starting as the captain of a trading expedition sent by the governor of Cuba to barter Spanish beads for Indian gold, Cortes transformed himself into a military commander, self-endowed with the mission of extending his sovereign's possessions and of converting the heathen.

He played a dangerous game of diplomacy with Montezuma and completely outwitted him, tricking and deceiving that unfortunate ruler, and finally dethroning him and sending him to his death. He kept no faith with Quauhtemotzin, but delivered him to torture, and, finally, on paltry evidence, he hanged him in a remote wilderness; but when the greatest kings of Europe were no more bound by the articles

of a signed treaty than by the phrases of a compliment, and when it was an accepted maxim that no agreement hurtful to religion or to the State was binding, how shall we condemn this soldier of fortune for conforming to the accepted usage of his age?

Bearing in mind the complete divorce that seemed to exist between morals and politics, between the private belief and the public conduct of the men who ruled Europe in that century, we may realise the injustice of measuring the life and actions of Cortes by other standards than those with which he was familiar.

Despite the casuistry that guided the policy of governments, it must not be assumed that the higher conscience of Christendom was either dormant or voiceless. The Spanish sovereigns displayed sincere and unfailing solicitude for the spiritual and material welfare of the American Indians. Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros was the first statesman to make the amelioration of their condition a matter of government policy, and the Flemish counsellors of the young king rendered effective many of the provisions of the deceased regent. Dominican monks, captained by the redoubtable Las Casas, who denied the right of the Spaniards to invade American territory, or to rule the natives without their consent, led a vigorous crusade in defence of the individual and collective liberty of the Indians, and in this they were sustained by the

universities of Salamanca and Alcalá. The Franciscan community in the city of Mexico wrote to Charles V., declaring that it were better if never an Indian were converted to Christianity, and never a foot of American soil were acquired for the Spanish crown, than that these results should be accomplished by the inhuman methods then in operation. Popes, such as Adrian VI. and Paul III., condemned the systems of slavery established in the new colonies, and an entire hierarchy of bishops and priests excommunicated refractory colonists who refused to release their illegally held and cruelly treated serfs.

Cortes extended toleration rather than approval to the institution of slavery; yielding to necessity, he recompensed his followers with *encomiendas* of Indians in the absence of any other provision by the crown to requite their services, but, in his testament, he records his grave doubts of the equity or wisdom of enslaving the Indians and enjoins his son to liberate his slaves and to make them full restitution if justice so demands. The relentless measures he employed or countenanced to effect his conquest, were abandoned when the necessity for using them ceased. The conquest achieved, the qualities of Cortes as an organiser, a legislator, and a ruler were called into play and, though the story of the reconstruction period may seem tame reading after the drama-

tic scenes of the great struggle, his sagacity, his foresight, and his moderation have caused critical historians to rank him higher as a statesman than as a soldier. In virtue of his pre-eminent qualities both as statesman and general, as well as because of the enduring importance of his conquest Fernando Cortes occupies an uncontested place amongst the heroes of the nations.

F. A. McN.

Schloss Ratzötz, Tyrol,
June, 1908.

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FERNANDO CORTES

FERNANDO CORTES

CHAPTER I

TO THE BEGINNING OF THE CONQUEST

Family—Early Years—First Voyage—Colonial Life—Quarrel with Velasquez—Battle of Ceutla—Palm Sunday

FERNANDO CORTES was born in the unimportant town of Medellin in Estramadura, in the year 1485. His father, Martin Cortes y Monroy, had served as a captain of fifty light cavalry, and both he and his wife, Catalina Pizarro Altamirano, belonged to families which ranked among the provincial nobility.[1] The efforts of Argensola and other ingenious genealogists to trace for Cortes an illustrious ancestry, reaching back even to the kings of Lombard and Tuscany, are not very convincing, nor do they seem important in the

[1] The unknown author of the early chronicle *De Rebus Gestis* thus describes Martin Cortes: "*pietate tamen et religione toto vitæ tempore clarus.*" And to his wife Caterina he pays the tribute: "*Caterina namque pudicitia et in conjugem amore nulli ætatis suæ feminæ cessit.*" Las Casas, who was no admirer of the conqueror, states that he had known his father who was a *cristiano viejo* and a gentleman, though poor (lib. iii., cap. xxvii.).

case of one who rose from obscure, but reputable beginnings, without the aid of family influence or superior fortune.[1] The house in which the future conqueror of Mexico was born, stood in the Calle de la Feria until it was destroyed by the French during the campaign of 1809.[2]

The infancy of the man, whose powers of endurance carried him through a life of extraordinary hardships and ceaseless activity, was that of a puling, delicate child, whose parents despaired of raising him to manhood. Lots were cast to determine which one of the twelve apostles should be his patron saint.[3] In this manner St. Peter was chosen, and to his patron's favour Cortes ascribed the preservation of his life on several critical occasions, and the success of his most hazardous undertakings. When their son was fourteen years old, his parents sent him to the University of Salamanca to prepare himself for the practice of law, a profession that was held in high esteem, and one that opened a promising career to a young man of ability. During his two years at the University, he lodged in the house of his paternal aunt, Inez de Paz, who was married to Francisco Nuñez de Varela, a citizen of Salamanca. Las Casas affirms that Cortes took his degree

[1] *Anales de Aragon* (1630), pp. 621-625. Caro de Torres, *Historia de las Ordines Militares* (1629) p. 103.

[2] Alaman, *Disertaciones*, dissert. v.

[3] Alaman, *Disertaciones sobre la Historia de la Republica Mexicana*, dissert. v.

as bachelor of laws, and had a good knowledge of Latin.[1] Doubtless a youth of his acquisitive mind profited greatly by two years of life in the University, but he discovered no aptitude for the study of law, and but little inclination to serious study of any kind. His taste was for arms and a life of adventure. He caused his parents the liveliest chagrin by abandoning the career they had chosen for him, and, on his return to Medellin, he further increased their anxieties by disorderly living. His ambition was to take service under Gonzalvo de Cordoba, the great captain amongst the military leaders of the time, but, renouncing this plan, he joined the expedition of Don Nicolas de Ovando, the recently appointed governor of Hispaniola, who was preparing to sail with an important fleet of thirty ships to assume the duties of his high office. Cortes was moved to this decision by the fact that Ovando was a friend of his family, and might be counted upon to advance his interests in the colony.

Almost on the eve of sailing, Cortes fell from a wall he was scaling to keep an amorous tryst with a lady, and, but for the timely intervention of an old woman, whose attention was attracted by the noise of his fall almost at her very door, this accident might have ended fatally. The dame arrived, just in time to prevent her son-in-law from running the prostrate youth through

[1] *Hist. General,* lib. iii., cap. xxvii.

the body with his sword.[1] As it was, he escaped with bruises of sufficient gravity to keep him in bed until after Ovando's fleet had sailed.

Upon his recovery he reverted to his original project of enlisting in Italy, and, with that intention, he set out for Valencia. What defeated his purpose is not recorded, but after a year of poverty and hardship in Valencia, he returned to Medellin where his parents, rendered desperate by the vagaries of their wayward son, were doubtless glad to furnish him the necessary money to enable him to follow Ovando to Hispaniola.

He sailed from San Lucar de Barrameda in 1504, on board the trading vessel of Alonso Quintero of Palos, bound with four others, laden with merchandise for the Indies. The little fleet followed the usual route by way of the Canary Islands, touching first at Gomera. Alonso Quintero twice sought to detach himself from his fellow-captains in order to reach port ahead of them, and dispose of his cargo at greater advantage without their competition. Both times he was thwarted by untoward weather, and the second time his pilot, Francisco Niño, lost his bearings, and the storm-tossed ship, short of provisions and water, was in imminent peril. On Good Friday, when hope seemed vain, a dove was seen to perch in the

[1] *De Rebus Gestis Fernandi Cortesi,* in Icazbalceta, tom. i.

ship's rigging, and, by following the flight of this bird of good omen when it took wing, land was sighted by Cristobal Zorro on Easter day, and four days later the vessel reached the port of Santo Domingo, where the other three had long since arrived and disposed of their cargoes.

The appearance of the dove was afterwards interpreted by some of the earlier biographers of Cortes as a manifestation of the divine guidance or as an augury for his future. There were even some who at the time thought they recognised an apparition of the Holy Ghost.[1] Don Nicolas de Ovando was absent from Santo Domingo when Cortes arrived, but his secretary, Medina, was an old friend of the latter's, and gave him hospitality in his house, informing him of the conditions of life in the colony, and advising him to settle near the town. To settle anywhere was no part of his plan, and he explained to the friendly secretary that he had come to obtain gold, not to till the soil. He stayed but a short time in the settlement and left in search of the coveted gold, but as soon as the governor returned and learned of his presence, he sent for him and showed him much favour. Shortly afterwards, Cortes took part in the subjugation of the provinces of

[1] *De Rebus Gestis:* "Alius, Sanctum esse Spiritum, qui in illius alitis specie, ut mæstos et afflictos solaretur, venire erat dignatus."

Higuey, Aniguayagua, and Baoruca, where the natives, goaded to desperation by the inhuman cruelties practised upon them, had finally risen under the Queen Anacoana. Diego Velasquez, a native of Cuellar, who had seen seventeen years of military service in Spain, was put in command of the operations, which were brief and successful, since the Indians possessed no arms worthy of the name and were by nature a timid people, entirely ignorant of warfare.[1] Cortes received as his share of the spoils, a *repartimiento* of Indians at Daiguao, and was appointed notary of the recently founded town of Azua. The ensuing five or six years of his life were devoid of any salient event, though Bernal Diaz del Castillo states that he was several times involved in quarrels about women, which led to duels, in one of which he received a wound in the lip, which left a scar ever afterwards.[2] He was fortunately prevented by an abscess or swelling on his knee, from joining the disastrous expedition of Alonso de Ojeda and Diego de Nicuesa to Darien. Don Nicolas de Ovando had meanwhile been succeeded in office by Diego Columbus, son of the Admiral, who, in 1511, fitted out an expedition for the conquest of Cuba, which he placed under the command of Diego Velasquez, and in which Cortes volunteered. This expedition consisted

[1] Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. iii.
[2] *Historia Verdadera*, cap. civ.

of three hundred men, but so weak was the resistance of the pacific natives, that the conquest of the island was effected almost without a struggle. Only one chief in the province of Mayci attempted to dispute the landing of the invaders, and he was quickly overcome and captured. This man, Hatuey by name, was sentenced to be burned as a "rebel," and when the cruel sentence was about to be carried out, a Franciscan friar approached him, exhorting him to receive baptism and thus ensure his soul going to heaven. The chief asked if there would be Spaniards in heaven, to which the friar answered that all hoped to go there. The chief replied that then he would rather not. They burned, but could not convert him,[1] and thus ended an inglorious campaign, prompted by cupidity, conducted with revolting inhumanity, and resulting in the speedy extermination of the vanquished and the perpetual dishonour of the victors. The conduct of Cortes, during this campaign, advanced his interests in every respect, for his genial manners and lively conversation made him a favourite among his companions, while his bravery and address acquired him a good reputation as a soldier and won the friendship of his commander. Such expeditions afforded but scanty opportunity to the men of the invading force to display their prowess, for

[1] Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, lib. iii., cap. xxv.; *Brevissima Relacion*, p. 27.

the several native tribes were subdued, after the barest semblance of serious military operations. Yet such mild warfare and the equally nerveless encounters with the natives in Hispaniola, afforded Cortes the only military training he ever received. The skill he afterwards displayed as a tactician, and his masterly generalship, were derived from his latent genius for command, which sprang, full-fledged, into consciousness, in response to the first demand made upon it.

In recognition of his services in Cuba, Cortes received an *encomienda* of Indians at Manicaro which he held in partnership with Juan Xuarez. He became a citizen of Santiago de Baracoa, and was successful, not only in his agricultural ventures, but also in his search for gold, in which he employed a number of his Indians.[1] During the first years of the residence of Cortes in Cuba, it may be assumed that he attended to his interests and enjoyed considerable popularity among his fellow-colonists as well as the favour of the Governor, Diego Velasquez, who extended a protecting friendship to him, such as an older man of high rank might naturally feel for one of the most promising young men among his colonists. As the changes which the relations between these two men underwent, were far-reaching in their effects, and worked powerfully upon the course of events

[1] Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. iv.; De Rebus Gestis.

El Adelantado DON DIEGO VELASQUES de Cuellar Autor del descubrimiento de nueva España.

DIEGO VELASQUEZ

FACSIMILE OF AN ENGRAVING IN HERRERA, VOL. I., PAGE 298

in the New World, it is necessary, before going farther, to consider somewhat the character of Diego Velasquez, and the causes which brought about the breach of their friendship. Velasquez was of noble family, and, though arriving in the Indies poor, had there accumulated an ample fortune. He had the habit of command, which, as governor of Cuba, he exercised with the scarcely restricted and arbitrary freedom his own temperament dictated and the usage amongst Spanish colonial governors sanctioned. With all this he was amiable, accessible, and fond of dispensing favours. Prescott estimates him as one of these captious persons who "when things do not go exactly to their taste, shift the responsibility from their shoulders, where it should lie, to those of others," and Herrera describes him as "ungenerous, credulous, and suspicious!" Fray Bartholomew de Las Casas, who knew him personally in Cuba, gives more place to his virtues in the description he has left of him, than do some others; while admitting that he was quick to resent a liberty, jealous of his dignity, too ready to take offence, he adds that he was neither vindictive nor slow to forgive. As an administrator of the affairs of the island, he showed himself active and capable, encouraging immigration, assisting the colonists, and extending the zone of Spanish influence. It appears therefore that his rather petty defects of character did not usually interfere with his public

conduct, and that he discharged his official duties satisfactorily to the colonists and as a faithful representative of the crown. He was, however, unquestionably avaricious, egotistical, and ambitious, and withal no easy master to serve. Commenting on the reproaches he afterwards heaped upon Cortes for his ingratitude towards him, Oviedo says that it was no whit worse than his own had been towards his benefactor, Diego Columbus, and hence it was "measure for measure." His desire to explore by deputy, and to win distinction vicariously, was defeated by the impossibility of finding men possessed of the required ability to undertake successfully such ventures, combined with sufficient docility to surrender to him the glory and profits. The two fundamental versions of the historic quarrel between Cortes and Velasquez are contradictory. One is furnished by Gomara, the other by Las Casas, and, upon one or the other, later historians have based their accounts. The version of Las Casas is that of an eye-witness while Gomara, on the other hand, only began his *Cronica de la Conquista* some twenty-five years or more after the events of which he wrote, and under the inspiration and direction of Cortes, then Marques del Valle, whose chaplain he had shortly before become.

Gomara's chronicle was somewhat of an *apologia,* and it no sooner appeared than its accuracy and veracity were impugned by partici-

pants in the events he described; notably by Bernal Diaz del Castillo, whose history was undertaken for the declared purpose of correcting Gomara, and was called with emphasis the *True* History of the Conquest. Gomara's account is briefly as follows: Cortes at that time paid court to Catalina Xuarez la Marcaida, one of the poor but beautiful sisters of his partner in Manicaro, Juan Xuarez, and won such favours from the lady as entitled her to exact the fulfilment of a promise of marriage, which she declared he had made her, but with which he refused to comply. The Xuarez family was from Granada, and came originally in the suite of Doña Maria de Toledo, wife of the viceroy, Don Diego Columbus, to Hispaniola, where it was hoped the four girls, whose dowry was their beauty, might make good marriages among the rich planters. This hope was not realised in Santo Domingo, and they removed to Cuba. Catalina, the eldest, was the most beautiful of all, and had many admirers, amongst whom her preference fell upon Cortes, who was ever ready for gallant adventures. The matter was brought before the governor, who summoned Cortes *ad audiendum verbum,* influenced in Catalina's favour, it was said, by one of her sisters, to whose charms he himself was not indifferent. In spite of official pressure, Cortes refused to make the reparation exacted of him. Such high words followed that the governor ordered

him to be imprisoned in the fortress under the charge of the alcalde, Cristobal de Lagos. His imprisonment was brief, for he managed to escape, carrying off the sword and buckler of his gaoler, and to take sanctuary in a church, from which neither the promises nor the threats of Velasquez could beguile him. One day, however, when he unwarily showed himself before the church door, the alguacil, Juan Escudero, seized him from behind and, aided by others, carried him on board a ship lying in the harbour. Cortes feared this foreshadowed transportation and, setting his wits to work, he contrived to escape a second time, dressed in the clothes of a servant, who attended him. He let himself down into a small skiff and pulled for the shore, but the strength of the current at that point, where the waters of the Macaguanigua River flow into the sea, was such, that his frail craft capsized, and he reached the shore swimming, with certain valuable papers tied in a packet on top of his head. He then betook himself to Juan Xuarez, from whom he procured clothes and arms, and again took sanctuary in the church. These repeated escapes suggest sympathetic collusion on the part of his gaolers.

Velasquez professed to be won over by such bravery and resource, and sent mutual friends to make peace. But Cortes, although he married Catalina, refused the governor's overtures,

and would not even speak to him, until, some Indian troubles breaking out, and Velasquez being at his headquarters outside the town, he somewhat alarmed the governor by suddenly appearing before him late one night, fully armed, saying that he had come to make peace and to offer his services. They shook hands and spent a long time in conversation together, and slept that night in the same bed, where they were found next morning by Diego de Orellana, who came to announce to the governor that Cortes had fled from the church.

Las Casas tells a different tale, in which no mention is made of the refusal to marry Catalina Xuarez as having any part in the quarrel, but asserts rather, that Cortes was secretary to Velasquez, and that the news of the arrival of certain appellate judges in Hispaniola having reached Cuba, all the malcontents in the colony, and those disaffected towards Velasquez, began secretly to collect material on which to base accusations against him, and that Cortes, acting with them, had been chosen to carry this information to the judges. The governor was informed of the plot, and arrested Cortes in the act of embarking with the incriminating papers in his possession, and would have ordered him to be hanged on the spot but for the intervention of his friends, who pleaded for him. Las Casas scouts the idea of any such reconciliation

as Gomara describes, and says that the governor, although he pardoned him, would not have him back as secretary, adding: "I saw Cortes in those days so small and humble that he would have craved the notice of the meanest servant of Velasquez."

The wrath of Velasquez was short-lived, for he afterwards made Cortes alcalde, and stood godfather to one of his children. During the succeeding years, the fortunes of Cortes improved, and he amassed a capital of some three thousand castellanos of which Las Casas remarks: "God will have kept a better account than I, of the lives it cost." Though married reluctantly, he seems to have been contented, and he described himself to the bishop as just as happy with Catalina as though she were the daughter of a duchess.[1]

Gold was the magnet which drew the Spanish adventurers to the New World, and, though it had nowhere been found either so easily or so plentifully as they expected, enough had been discovered to whet their appetites for more. They lived in the midst of a world of mysterious possibilities which might any day, by a lucky discovery, become realities. The Spanish settlements in the New World were, at that time, limited to the islands of Hispaniola (Hayti), Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica, which were called

[1] Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. iii., cap. xxvii.

the "Indies"[1] by the discoverers and conquerors, because they were firmly persuaded they had encircled half the globe and reached the Orient. Besides these four islands, there was the colony of Darien. Serious projects for colonisation were not yet conceived, and what settlements there were, had been made by disillusioned immigrants, who, when they found that gold and pearls, instead of lying at their feet, had to be sought as elsewhere, with hard labour, enslaved the natives for the exploitation of the natural resources of the islands. Thus the slave trade sprang up, and, as the Indians, unaccustomed to hard work and harsh treatment died off in such numbers as to rapidly depopulate the neighbourhoods of the Spanish settlements, expeditions were constantly organised to the neighbouring islands for the purpose of capturing the natives. The system of *repartimientos* and *encomiendas* was begun under Columbus and, in spite of the denunciation of the Church and repeated edicts of the home government, the slave trade flourished and the island population rapidly dwindled.

In 1517 Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba, a rich planter of Cuba, organised and equipped a fleet of three vessels manned in part by some

[1] Commonly referred to by early writers as the Islands, in contradistinction to the settlements established later on the mainland.

of the survivors of the first colony at Darien, and of which he himself took command. The principal object of this expedition was to capture Indians to be sold as slaves in Cuba, and the governor furnished one ship on condition that he should be reimbursed in slaves.[1] The first land discovered was a small island to which was given the name of Las Mugeres (Women's Island), because of the images of female deities [2] they found in the temple there. This island lies off the extreme point of Yucatan, and from it, the Spaniards saw, what seemed to them, a large and important city, with many towers and lofty buildings, to which they gave the fanciful name of Grand Cairo. In a battle with the Indians at Catoche, they captured two natives, who afterwards became Christians, baptised under the names of Julian and Melchor, and rendered valuable services as interpreters.

Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba died a few days after his arrival in Cuba from the wounds he had received at Catoche, and the other members of the expedition made their way back to Santiago where the spoils taken from the temples, the specimens of gold, the two strange Indians, and most of all, the marvellous tales of the men, served to excite the eager cupidity of the colonists, ever ready to believe that El Dorado was found.

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. i.

[2] Statues of the goddesses Xchel, Ixchebeliax, and others.

Diego Velasquez promptly organised an expedition to follow up these discoveries and to establish trading relations with the natives, which he placed under the command of his kinsman, Juan de Grijalba.[1] It was composed of four ships, the *San Sebastian, La Trinidad, Santiago,* and *Santa Maria.* The captains under Grijalba were Francisco de Avila, Pedro de Alvarado, and Francisco de Montejo.[2] This fleet set sail on May 1, 1518, and after a fair voyage, reached the island of Cozumel on May 3d.[3] Grijalba visited several points along the coast,

[1] He was a native of Cuellar who came as a lad to Cuba.

[2] Bernal Diaz, cap. viii.; Oviedo, lib. xviii., cap. viii.; Orozco y Berra, vol. iv., cap. i.

[3] *Itinerario de larmata del Rey Cattolico,* in Icazbalceta's *Documentos Ineditos,* vol. i.

Cozumel, also sometimes called Acuzamil (ah-Cuzamil meaning the "Swallows") was discovered on the feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross and hence named by him, Santa Cruz. He took possession in the name of the Spanish sovereigns and of Diego Velasquez, under whose commission the expedition had sailed. There was a stone building on the island, having a square tower with a door in each of its four sides. Inside this were idols, palm branches, and bones, which the Indians said were those of a great chief. (Oviedo, lib. xvii., cap. ix.) The tower was surmounted by a smaller square turret which was reached by an outside staircase. Grijalba hoisted the Spanish flag on this turret and named the place San Juan de Puerta Latina. The chaplain, Fray Juan Diaz said mass. The inhabitants seemed poor, and what gold they produced was mostly an alloy with copper, of little value, which the Indians called *guanin* and prized highly. (Las Casas, lib. vii., cap. lxvii.)

giving Spanish names to various bays, islands, rivers, and towns. The Tabasco River, of which the correct Indian name seems to have been Tabzcoob, received the name of Grijalba. On arriving at the river which they named Banderas, because of the numerous Indians carrying white flags, whom they saw along the coast, they first heard of the existence of Montezuma, of whom these people were vassals, and by whom they had been ordered to keep a look out for the possible return of the white men, whose former visit had been reported to the emperor. On the 17th of June, a landing was made on the small island, where the Spaniards first discovered the proofs that human sacrifices and cannibalism were practised by the natives, for they found there a blood-stained idol, human heads, members, and whole bodies with the breasts cut open and the hearts gone.[1] Grijalba named the island Isla de los Sacrificios.

Cozumel was a place of pilgrimage, and in one of the great temples there stood a hollow terra-cotta statue, called Teel-Cuzam (The Swallow's Feet), in which a priest placed himself to give oracular answers to the pilgrims. (Cogolludo, *Hist. de Yucatan*, lib. iv., cap. vii.)

[1] This practice is traced, by some historians, to the tribe of the Mexi, which descended from Tenoch, son of Iztacmixcoatl, the progenitor of the Nahoa family, but, with what justice, does not clearly appear, as this people may have received it from some tribe or race preceding, or allied, to them. Prisoners taken in war were the most highly prized victims, but failing these, or for the celebration

From the island which they named San Juan de Ulua [1] (from the word *Culua* which they imperfectly caught from the natives), Grijalba sent Pedro de Alvarado, on June 24th, with the *San Sebastian,* to carry the results of his trad-

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of minor festivals, slaves were easily bought, or were offered by their owners for the purpose. Small infants were also commonly sold by their mothers, and instances of free-born men offering themselves as victims, for one motive or another, were not unknown. The victims were frequently drugged, in such wise that they went unconsciously, or even willingly to the altar. If a great festival, requiring many, and choice victims, fell in a time of peace, war would be undertaken upon any frivolous pretext, in order to procure the desired offerings.

The warrior who had captured the victim in battle would not eat of the latter's flesh, as a sort of spiritual relationship was held to exist between them, not dissimilar to that of a sponsor and his god-child in Christian baptism, or even closer, for the flesh of the victim was considered also as the very flesh of the captor. The eating of this human body was not an act of gluttonous cannibalism alone, but was believed to have mystic significance, the flesh having undergone some mysterious transmutation, by virtue of the sacrificial rite, and to be really consecrated; it was spoken of also, as the "true body" of the deity, to whom it was offered, and, also, as the "food of soul." None but chiefs, and distinguished persons, specially designated, were permitted to partake of the sacramental feast, which was celebrated with much ceremony and gravity. If the victim were a slave, the rites were similar, but simpler.

[1] A small island in the harbour of Vera Cruz, on which the Spaniards afterwards built their greatest fortress in America. It was the last stronghold over which the Spanish flag floated in Mexico.

ing operations and an account of his discoveries to Diego Velasquez, and to ask for an authorisation to colonise, which had not been given in his original instructions, but which the members of the expedition exacted should now be done.[1] Diego Velasquez had meanwhile felt some impatience, which gradually became alarm, at hearing nothing from the expedition, so he sent Cristobal de Olid, with a ship, to look for it. Olid landed also at Cozumel, and took formal possession by right, as he supposed, of discovery. After coasting about for some time, and finding no traces of Grijalba, and having been obliged to cut his cables in a storm which had lost him his anchors, he returned to Cuba to augment the uneasiness of the governor. At this juncture, however, Alvarado arrived with the treasure and Grijalba's report and, without waiting for more news, Velasquez set about preparing another expedition. He sent Juan de Saucedo to Hispaniola to solicit from the Jeronymite fathers[2] the necessary authority for his

[1] Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, lib. iii., cap. cxii.

[2] Las Casas had succeeded by the moving picture he drew of the cruelties practised by the colonists on the Indians, in interesting Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros in their welfare. The Cardinal, being then regent of Spain, pending the arrival of the young King Charles from Flanders, appointed a commission composed of three Jeronymite friars to reside in Hispaniola and see that the recently enacted laws for the protection of the natives were observed. These friars were not governors as has

undertaking, whose objects, it was stated, were to look for Grijalba's lost armada, which might be in danger, to seek for Cristobal de Olid (notwithstanding he was already safely returned), and to rescue six Spanish captives who were said to be prisoners of a cacique in Yucatan. On October the 5th, Grijalba arrived in Cuba, where he was coldly received by the governor, who professed himself much disappointed at the meagre results of the voyage, and criticised the captain severely for not having yielded to the wishes of his companions to found a settlement on the newly discovered coast, despite his own instructions to the contrary.

Several names were under consideration for the commandership of the new armada, but for different reasons one after the other was excluded, and the governor's final choice fixed upon Fernando Cortes.[1] This selection was attributed to the influence of Amador de Lares, a royal official of astute character who exercised a certain ascendency over Velasquez, and of Andres de Duero, the governor's private secretary, both of whom Cortes had induced by promises of a generous share of the treasures that might be discovered, to present his name

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been stated by some writers, though they exercised large powers of control over the dealings of the Spanish colonists with the Indians. Their mission was only partially successful and their residence in the Indies was brief.

[1] Las Casas, lib. iii., cap. civ.; Bernal Diaz, cap. xix.

and secure his appointment. Since both Grijalba and Olid were safely back in Cuba, the only one of the three reasons first advanced for this expedition which remained, was the rescue of the Christian captives in Yucatan, and, although Velasquez had severely censured Grijalba for not establishing a colony or trading post somewhere, he also omitted this authorisation in his instructions to Cortes.

Cortes threw himself, heart and soul, into the new enterprise, which offered him exactly the opportunity, in search of which he had come to the Indies fourteen years before. The mutual recriminations afterwards indulged in, so obscure the facts that it is difficult to discover exactly what share of the expense of the equipment was borne by each, but of Cortes it must be said that he staked everything he possessed or could procure on the venture, even raising loans by mortgages on his property. His appointment to such an important command did not fail to arouse jealousies on the part of some, and the increased consequence he gave himself in his dress, manners, and way of living served to so aggravate these sentiments that, hardly had the work of organisation got fairly under way, when his enemies adroitly began to excite the suspicious spirit of Velasquez. A dwarf, who played the court jester in the governor's household, was inspired to make oracular jokes, in which thinly veiled warnings of what

was to be expected of Cortes's masterful spirit, once he was free from control and in command of such an armada, were conveyed to Velasquez, and these barbed jests did not fail of their purpose. The governor's distrust finally pushed him to the incredible folly of deciding to revoke his appointment as commander, and to substitute one Vasco Porcallo, a native of Caceres. This decision he made known to Lares and Duero, the very men through whom Cortes had negotiated to obtain his place, and they hastened to warn their *protégé* of the governor's intention.

To accept the humiliation, the public ridicule, to say nothing of the financial ruin, into which the revocation of his appointment, almost on the eve of sailing, would have plunged him, was an alternative which never could have been for a moment considered by Cortes, who immediately hastened his preparations, got his provisions and men on board that same day, and stood down the bay with all his ships during the night. He even seized the entire meat supply of the town, for which he paid with a gold chain he wore.[1] The accounts of the manner of the departure of the fleet conflict, and it has been represented as a veritable flight, but Bernal Diaz asserts that, although he got everything ready very quickly and hastened the date

[1] Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, cap. cxiv.; Gomara, *Cronica de la Conquista*, cap. vii.

of sailing, Cortes went with a number of others, and took formal leave of the governor with embraces and mutual good wishes; and that after he had heard mass, Diego Velasquez came down to the port to see the armada off.

This simple and natural version is in consonance with the character of Cortes, and he doubtless exercised scrupulous care to avoid provoking the testy governor. Aware of the intrigues against him, and of the uncertainty of his position, his safety lay in pushing forward his preparations with unostentatious haste, masking his determination under an astute display of increased deference towards his suspicious superior. Although he had evidently secured his captains, and could count on his crews, the moment for an act of open defiance was not yet, nor did Velasquez, in a letter to the licenciate Figueroa, dated November 17, 1519, which was to be delivered to Charles V., allege any such, though he would hardly have failed to make the most of each item in his arraignment of his rebellious lieutenant. Stopping at Macaca, Trinidad, and Havana he forcibly seized stores at these places, and from ships which he stopped, sometimes paying for them, and sometimes giving receipts and promises. Everywhere he increased his armament, and enlisted more men.

The governor's uneasy suspicions augmented

after the sailing of the fleet, being aggravated by the members of his household, who were jealous of the sudden rise in Cortes's fortunes, and, possibly, honestly distrustful of the signs of independence he had already manifested. In the work of fretting Velasquez, a half foolish astrologer was called in, who foretold disaster and imputed to Cortes, schemes of revenge for past wrongs, referring to his former imprisonment by the governor's orders, and forecasting treachery. These representations harmonised but too well with Velasquez's own fears, and easily prevailed upon him to send decisive orders to his brother-in-law, Francisco Verdugo, alcalde mayor of Trinidad, to assume command of the fleet until Vasco Porcallo, who had been appointed successor to Cortes, should arrive. For greater security he repeated these instructions to Diego de Ordaz, Francisco de Morla, and others on whose loyalty he thought he could count. Nobody, however, undertook to carry out the orders to displace and imprison Cortes, whose faculty for making friends was such, that he had already won over all those on whom Velasquez relied, especially Ordaz and Verdugo.[1] The very messengers who brought the official orders to degrade and imprison him joined the expedition. Public sympathy was

[1] Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. viii.; Las Casas, *Hist. Gen.*, cap. cxiv., cxv.; *De Rebus Gestis* in Icazbalceta, *Documentos Ineditos*, tom. i.

entirely with him, for he had rallied some of the best men in Cuba to his standard, who thus had a stake in the success of the enterprise which depended primarily on the ability of the commander. They had full confidence in their leader, and it suited neither their temper nor their interest to see him superseded. It was Cortes himself who replied to the governor's letters, seeking to reassure him with protestations of loyalty and affection, counselling him meanwhile to silence the malicious tongues of the mischief-makers in Santiago.

The governor was in no way tranquillised by such a communication; on the contrary, the suppression of his orders by Verdugo enraged him beyond measure. The fleet had meanwhile gone to Havana whither a confidential messenger, one Garnica, was sent with fresh, and more stringent orders to the lieutenant-governor, Pedro Barba who resided there, positively forbidding the fleet to sail, and ordering the immediate imprisonment of Cortes. Diego Velasquez was seldom happy in his choice of men, and, in this instance, his "confidential" messenger not only brought these official orders to the lieutenant-governor, but he likewise delivered to Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo, a Mercedarian friar who accompanied the expedition, a certain letter from another priest, resident in the executive household, warning Cortes of the sense of the

governor's orders.[1] Failure attended all Velasquez's efforts, for Don Pedro Barba replied, telling him plainly that it was not in his power to stop Cortes, who was popular, not only with his troops, but also with the townspeople; and that any attempt to interfere with him would result in a general rising in his favour. Bernal Diaz declares that they would have died for him, to a man.

During these days he played, as he himself afterwards described it to Las Casas, the part of "the gentle corsair."[2] Parting in this manner from the royal governor of Cuba, joint owner of the ships and their contents, it is obvious that there was no turning back for Cortes; he was henceforth driven forward by the knowledge that sure disgrace, very likely death was behind him, and drawn on by the enticing prospect of achieving such complete success as should vindicate his lawless courses.

The entire fleet[3] sailed for the island of

[1] Las Casas comments severely on the want of judgment displayed by Velasquez in his attempts to recall Cortes. "Never have I seen so little knowledge of affairs shown, as in this letter of Diego Velasquez—that he should have imagined that one who had but recently so affronted him, would delay his departure at his bidding!" (*Hist. Gen.*, cap. cxv.)

[2] *Hist. Gen.*, cap. cxv.

[3] Authorities do not agree in regard to the force commanded by Cortes. Bernal Diaz states that the number of mariners was one hundred and ten, while of soldiers, including thirty-two crossbowmen and thirteen arquebusiers,

Cozumel on February 18, 1519, and the first vessel to reach land was the one commanded by Pedro de Alvarado who began his career by an act of disobedience to orders, characteristic of his headstrong and cruel temperament. When the commander arrived two days later, he found that the Indians had all been frightened away by the Spaniards' violence in plundering their town, and taking some of them prisoners.[1] Cortes clearly defined his policy in dealing with the natives at the very outset. After ordering the pilot Camacho, who had brought the vessel to land before the others, to be clapped into irons, for disobeying his orders, he severely rebuked Alvarado, explaining to him that his measures were fatal to the success of the expedition. The prisoners were not only released, but each received gifts, and all were assured through the interpreters, Melchor and Julian,

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there were five hundred and fifty-three; two hundred Indians, men and women, went along as porters, cooks, and camp-servants. There were sixteen horses, which proved to be his most valuable asset, being of greater use even than the ten cannon and four small falconets he carried.

The Letter of Relation from Vera Cruz gives the total number of soldiers as four hundred, while Diego Velasquez himself wrote to the licenciate Figueroa, chief judge in Hispaniola that they numbered six hundred men. The supply of ammunition was plentiful. The flag-ship was a vessel of one hundred tons burden, three others were of eighty tons, and the remainder were small brigantines without decks,—in all eleven vessels.

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. xxv.

THE VOYAGE OF CORTES TO MEXICO

REPRODUCED FROM HELPS "SPANISH CONQUEST"

that they should suffer no further harm, and that they should therefore go and call back the others who had fled. Everything that had been stolen from the town was restored, and the fowls and other provisions that had been eaten, were all paid for liberally. Discipline was enforced, also, among the Spaniards, and seven sailors, who were found guilty of stealing some bacon from a soldier, were sentenced to be publicly whipped.

The head chief of the island came to visit Cortes, who received him with every demonstration of friendship, assuring him that the persons and the property of all his people would be respected. This diplomacy was highly successful, and Spaniards and Indians mingled together in perfect amity.[1] Cortes learned from the caciques that there were some white prisoners in Yucatan about two days' march distant from there, and that some traders who were there present had seen them only a few days before. A messenger was despatched in search of the captives, bearing a letter tied in his hair.[2]

[1] *First Letter of Relation to Charles V.:* Las Casas, lib. iii., cap. cxvii.; Bernal Diaz, cap. xxv., xxvi.; Gomara, *Cronica,* cap. x.

[2] Noble Sirs, I left Cuba with a fleet of eleven ships and five hundred Spaniards and have arrived at Cozumel, whence I write you this letter.

The people of this island assure me that there are five or six bearded white men in this country, who greatly resemble us, and I conjecture, though they can give me

Three days after the departure of this messenger, Cortes took the further precaution of despatching Diego de Ordaz, with the two smallest brigantines to Cape Catoche, where other messengers were landed with instructions to find the captives or return with some information within eight days. During this interval of waiting, Cortes undertook the conversion of the natives, employing the interpreters Julian and Melchor to explain the doctrines of Christianity, and to exhort them to abandon their superstitions and idolatry. The Indians affirmed that their gods were beneficent, bringing them health, harvests, and victory over their enemies, and that they would under no circumstances abandon them. The zeal of Cortes being of the impetuous order that ill-brooked resistance, he had the idols overthrown and rolled down the steps of the temple; he ordered the interior to be thoroughly cleansed, after which an altar was improvised, a statue of Our Lady set up, and two carpenters constructed a large cross of wood above the altar. The chaplain of the ex-

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no other indications, that you are Spaniards. I, and the gentlemen who have come with me to explore and take possession of these countries, earnestly beg you to come to us within five or six days after you receive this, without further delay or excuse.

If you will come, all of us will recognise, and thank you, for the assistance this armada shall receive from you. I send a brigantine to bring you, with two ships as escort.

HERNAN CORTES.

pedition, Juan Diaz, then said mass. What impression these acts made upon the Indians, we have no means of knowing. Cortes reported to the emperor that he had succeeded in making them understand perfectly their obligations as Christians, and that he left them contented with their new religion. This optimistic view can hardly be accepted unreservedly. Julian and Melchor doubtless possessed but an indifferent knowledge of Spanish, and their comprehension of the mysteries of the Catholic religion was probably imperfect, while there was nothing in the daily conduct of the Spaniards to favourably illustrate Christian morals. The emblem of the cross was no doubt perfectly acceptable to the Indians, as it was the sign of their own rain-god and hence a familiar symbol of worship.

At the end of the eight days Diego de Ordaz returned from Catoche, and reported that the Indian messengers had not appeared, and that owing to rough weather and the dangerous character of the coast, he had been obliged to return to save his ships from foundering. Cortes showed some vexation at this result.

On March 5th[1] the fleet sailed for Isla de las Mugeres where the people landed and heard mass. An accident to the ship commanded by Juan de Escalante delayed the others until the twelfth of the month, while his vessel

[1] Gomara, cap. xii.

was lightened of her cargo and repaired. A violent storm of wind and rain occasioned still further delay in leaving port, and on March 13th an Indian log canoe was seen approaching, in which were three naked men, armed with bows and arrows. One of these men advanced and called out in Spanish, "Are you Christians, and of what sovereign are you vassals?" [1] This was Geronimo de Aguilar, a native of Encija, a man in holy orders, who had been captured with some twenty others, while crossing from Darien to Hispaniola. Their caravel, under command of Valdivia, was wrecked on the treacherous reefs called Las Viboras, situated fifteen leagues to the south of Jamaica, and extending a distance of forty-five leagues. Twenty of the crew were saved in an open boat, without sails, food, or water, and after drifting hopelessly for fourteen days, during which time seven or eight died, their boat was cast on the coast of Yucatan. Valdivia and five others were at once sacrificed and eaten by the Mayas who had captured them, and the survivors were confined in cages to fatten for the same miserable end. Geronimo de Aguilar and Alonso Guerrero succeeded in escaping and, after wandering some time in the forests, were captured by another, but less blood-thirsty, cacique, who treated them kindly. Guerrero adopted the ways and cus-

[1] Andres de Tapia, *Relacion* in Icazbalceta, p. 556.

toms of the Indians; learned their language; tattooed his face; married an Indian wife; and became, in all respects, one of them. He rose to a position of some influence in the tribe, and it was even alleged that he shared in their idolatry and cannibalism.

When Cortes's letter was delivered to Aguilar, he procured permission to go to the white men, but his companion, Guerrero, refused to go, for he was ashamed to show himself, naked and tattooed.[1] Moreover he was fond of his wife and his three sons, and enjoyed a position of authority in the country, whereas to go back to Spain meant for him a return to poverty and hardship. Aguilar was taken before Cortes, who failed to distinguish him from the Indians, and asked Andres de Tapia, which was the Spaniard. The finding of Geronimo de Aguilar fulfilled one of the original purposes of the expedition.

The fleet set sail from Cozumel on March 13th, and after experiencing some rough weather which separated the ships from one another, again united at the island of Las Mugeres the following day. One of the captains, Escobar, was sent in a brigantine to explore the Boca de Terminos and returned bringing a quantity of hare and rabbit skins. He had been welcomed with great effusion by a greyhound

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. xxvii.

that had been left behind by Grijalba's men, and had evidently prospered on the fat of the land. From Boca de Terminos, the ships continued to the Tabasco River, which, as before stated, the Spaniards had christened Rio de Grijalva. As the larger vessels could not ascend the river, Cortes landed his people in small barques at a point some half a league distant from the town of Tabasco, where Grijalba had had a friendly reception from the natives.

The Indians were found to have changed their sentiments towards the white men and Geronimo de Aguilar, who acted as interpreter, announced that the chiefs were defiant, and the town full of armed men prepared to fight. Cortes established his camp as well as possible, and sent out three scouts to find a road leading into the town. The following day (March 23d,) several canoes appeared, bringing a few provisions for the Spaniards, but the Indians insisted that they should leave the country without entering their town. Cortes replied by causing the pompous *requerimiento* or summons, that he had in readiness, to be read to them, which invited and admonished the Indians as vassals of the Spanish sovereign to yield obedience. This document was invented and drawn up, for the use of Pedrarius de Avila by Dr. Palacios Rubio, a jurisconsult and member of the Royal Council, and was afterwards employed in

the other colonies.[1] The requirement began thus:

On the part of the King Fernando and of the Queen Doña Juana, his daughter, Queen of Castile, Leon, &c., &c.: Rulers of the barbarous natives, we their servants notify and make it known to you, as best we can, that the living and eternal God, Our Lord, created the heavens and the earth and a man and a woman, of whom you and we and all men in the world are descendants, as well as all who shall come after us. However, because of the multitude of generations issuing from these, in the five thousand years since the creation of the world, it was necessary that some should go one way, and some another, and that they should be divided into many kingdoms and many provinces, as they could not maintain themselves in one. God, Our Lord, gave the charge of all these people to one called St. Peter, that he should be lord and superior over all men in the world and that all should obey him, and that he should be the head of all the human race and should love all men, of whatsoever land, religion and belief; and He gave him the world for his kingdom, ordering his seat to be placed in Rome, as the place best suited for ruling the world; but he was permitted also to establish his seat in any other part of the world and to judge and govern all peoples,

[1] The full text of this document is reprinted in Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 86.

Christians, Moors, Jews, Gentiles, and of whatsoever other sect or creed they might be, &c.[1]

The provisions of the papal bull giving the dominion over America to the Spanish sovereigns then followed.

The notary, or clerk, who accompanied the expedition, read this unique document, indifferent to the fact that the Indians could not comprehend a word, even were they near enough to hear; and sometimes the reading of it would take place with no Indians at all present. All scruples were satisfied by this formality, and, if submission did not follow, the commander dealt with the natives as with obdurate rebels against the royal authority.

The Indians at Tabasco neither comprehended nor heeded the reading of this singular claim on their obedience, and there ensued a fiercely contested battle, in which they vainly disputed the landing of the Spaniards. Cortes took formal possession of the country for his sovereign, striking the trunk of a great ceiba tree that grew in the court of the principal temple, three times with his sword, and announcing that he would defend his king's prerogative against all comers. The Indian interpreter, Melchor, deserted the Spaniards during this fight, and encouraged his countrymen to keep up a continuous

[1] Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 86.

attack, telling them the white men were few in number and mortal like themselves. Three prisoners were taken by the Spaniards, who furnished this information to Aguilar, adding that a combined attack by all the Indian forces would be made on the morrow.

The next morning, at dawn, Cortes took command of twelve of his best horsemen, and, having divided his forces into three divisions of one hundred men, each under command of a captain, and provided a rear-guard of one hundred more, he marched his men out towards the village of Ceutla, where a multitude of warriors, well armed and wearing their martial paint and feathers, were awaiting them. The Indians rushed courageously to the fray and, by sheer force of numbers, overwhelmed the invaders in such wise that it was hardly possible to distinguish friend from foe, and the battle became a hand to hand fight at the closest possible quarters.

Though under fire for the first time, the warriors showed little fear of the strange weapons that dealt death amongst them, partly because it was difficult for them to observe the deadly effects of the muskets, and partly because the din of their drums and trumpets drowned the sound of the firing. Cortes, who had held his horsemen concealed in a wood, from whence he observed the course of the battle, suddenly fell upon the rear-guard of the enemy. The ap-

pearance of the horses, which the Indians beheld for the first time, their quick movements and the glancing armour of the cavaliers, struck terror and amazement among the warriors. The horse and his rider seemed to them one resistless creature. This spirited attack on the enemy's rear, scattered the Indians, and enabled the Spanish infantry to collect and re-form their lines. The retreat soon became a rout, the horsemen pursuing the fugitives across the open country, killing many, and capturing some, until the survivors disappeared into the impenetrable forests.

This decisive battle, which took place on March 25th, became known as the battle of Centla, and in Gomara's *Cronica*, as well as in Tapia's *Relacion* and the accounts of others, the victory was attributed to the miraculous intervention of St. James, the patron of Spain, or of St. Peter, the patron of Cortes. Bernal Diaz says it may have been as Gomara describes, and that the glorious apostles, *Señor Santiago* and *Señor San Pedro*, did appear, but that he, miserable sinner, was not worthy to behold the apparition.[1]

[1] The first recorded apparition of St. James on the field of battle was at the great victory of Clavijo, A.D. 844, in which 70,000 Moslems perished; from thenceforth the Saint became the military patron of Spain and his name "Santiago," the popular battle-cry. Spanish soldiers were so familiar with the idea of the apostle's apparition that its recurrence in Mexico was simply a proof to them of the justice of their cause and a celestial assurance of victory.

In the First Letter of Relation, Cortes reported to the emperor that twenty Spaniards were wounded in this engagement, of whom none died. The number of Indian warriors was fixed at forty thousand, increased by Andres de Tapia in his *Relacion* to forty-eight thousand, but these figures can hardly be accurate, and, as Orozco y Berra properly observes, must be taken to represent the idea of multitude rather than an actual counting.[1]

The immediate result of the battle of Ceutla was the submission of the entire province to the pretensions of the Spaniards. One cacique after another came to Cortes, bringing presents of gold, stuffs, provisions, and slaves, and offering his allegiance to the King of Spain. It was part of Cortes's policy to receive the humbled chieftains kindly, and to declare that their past rebellion was forgotton and forgiven. In reply to enquiries as to whence came the gold, the Indians answered, "from Colhua," the latter word being one which had no significance as yet for the Spaniards, but which they took to mean some place farther inland. It appeared from what the interpreters could gather, that the deserter, Melchor, had been sacrificed by the

[1] Great discrepancy prevails in regard to the numbers engaged and the number slain or wounded. Las Casas sarcastically describes this battle, in which he declares 30,000 natives fell, as the "first preaching of the gospel by Cortes in New Spain!"—*Hist Gen.*, cap. cxix.

people of Tabasco when they saw the evil results that followed on their acceptance of his counsel to resist the Spaniards. Cortes exacted as a gage of the caciques' good faith, that the inhabitants of the towns should return to their dwellings and to their usual occupations. When life had somewhat resumed its normal trend, his missionary zeal once more became active, and Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo was directed to instruct the Indians in the Catholic faith and to exhort them to renounce idolatry. Geronimo de Aguilar doubtless proved a surer interpreter than his predecessor; in any case the people of Tabasco showed no reluctance to receive the friar's instructions and to acknowledge the power of the Christian God. A temple was cleansed and provided with an altar, surmounted by a statue of the Blessed Virgin and Child, above which stood a large cross of wood. Fray Bartolomé said mass and delivered a sermon, which was interpreted by Aguilar. The name of the town was changed to Santa Maria de la Victoria.

Twenty female slaves who had been presented, by the caciques, to Cortes, were instructed by Fray Bartolomé, and solemnly baptised, partly, if not chiefly, it would seem, to render them worthy of the embraces of the Christian Spaniards. Amongst these slave women, was Marina of Painalla, the interpreter, whose part in

the conquest will unfold itself in the course of this narrative, and who will be duly introduced in a later chapter. Cortes took his departure from Santa Maria on Palm Sunday,—the first Palm Sunday celebration ever witnessed on the American continent. The caciques were invited to be present at the religious ceremonies, and at an early hour all were assembled in the temple court where the altar with its cross and madonna had been erected. The Mercedarian friar, Bartolomé de Olmedo, and the chaplain, Juan Diaz, celebrated the beautiful office of the day, with all the solemnity and whatever pomp their resources afforded. Cortes, with his officers and men formed in procession, each carrying a blessed palm, and performing the adoration and kissing of the cross.[1] The Indians, who viewed with silent wonder these imposing and mysterious rites, afterwards accompanied the Spaniards to their ships, where they took leave of them with many protestations of friendship and promises to observe the Catholic teachings imparted to them, and to venerate the cross and holy images left in their temple.

The men crowded into the barques and some canoes furnished by the Indians and, still carry-

[1] This ceremony properly belongs to the Good Friday function and precedes the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified, but was probably inserted here the better to impress the Indians with the sanctity of the sacred emblem.

ing the blessed palms, they passed down the stream to where the vessels rode at anchor, awaiting them.[1]

[1] Bernal Diaz, caps. xxi–xxxvi. Andres de tapia, *Relacion.* Gomara, cap. xxviii. First Letter of Relation. Peter Martyr, *De Insulis nuper inventis,* p. 351.

CHAPTER II

MONTEZUMA AND HIS EMPIRE

The Aztec Empire—Origines—Civilisation—Institutions —Montezuma—Quetzalcoatl

IT is important at this point of our narrative to review the political organization of the Mexican empire; its moral, intellectual, and material conditions, as well as the character of the sovereign himself and the relations in which he stood to the neighbouring states, not subject to his rule.

The Aztec empire at the time of the Spanish conquest, comprised about sixteen thousand square leagues, and Humboldt states in one passage of his *Essai Politique sur le Royaume de Nouvelle Espagne,* that its greatest extent covered an area of from eighteen to twenty thousand leagues, but these figures included the neighbouring kingdom of Mechoacan, which was not subject to Montezuma. The boundaries of the empire were estimated by historians of the conquest, who based their calculations on the tribute rolls in picture-writings but its limits cannot be fixed with certainty. Señor Alaman states that it extended from one ocean to the other and was bounded on the south by the

Zacatula River and that its western frontier did not extend beyond Tula, while the mountain chain of Pachuca formed its northern limit.[1] The central valley of Mexico, at an altitude of more than seven thousand feet above the sea-level, has a circumference, according to Humboldt, of about sixty-seven leagues, shut in by stupendous mountain ranges whose principal peaks are the now extinct volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl. One tenth of its extent was covered by five lakes of which the largest was the salt-water lake of Tezcoco.

The different tribes or nations of Anahuac came, according to their several traditions, from the north-west, in a series of migrations, but of their original starting point, they preserved no clear record. M. de Guigne presents proofs tending to show that the Chinese visited Mexico as early as 458 A.D., Horn,[2] Scherer,[3] Humboldt.[4] and other authorities, assign an Asiatic origin to the Toltecs and other Mexican peoples. That Mexico received settlers from other parts of the world, seems also certain. Aristotle[5] relates that Carthaginian sailors passed the Pillars of Hercules and, after sailing sixty days to the west, reached a beautiful and fertile country,

[1] *Disertaciones*, i.
[2] *De originibus Americanis*, 1699.
[3] *Recherches Historiques.*
[4] *Essai Politique.*
[5] *De admirandis in natura.*

and that so many began to go thither that the Senate of Carthage passed a law suppressing such emigration, to prevent the depopulation of the city.

The efforts to graft Mexican civilisation onto an Asiatic or African stock have not been entirely successful, for, while there undoubtedly exist points of striking similarity, these seem to be counterbalanced by still more important divergencies. The paucity of positive data or even coherent traditions, has left a wide field open to speculation, of which many learned and ingenious seekers have availed themselves to the fullest extent, but without achieving results commensurate with their labours. Without attempting a thorough search into the racial origin of the tribes, which Cortes found in the valley of Mexico, it may be briefly stated that the best evidence before us points to Yucatan as the culminating centre of American civilisation, from whence a knowledge of law, arts, and manufactures, and the influence of an organised religious system spread northwards.

The splendid ruins of Yucatan and Central America attest the existence of a race of people, which, whatever its origin, was isolated from European and Asiatic influence alike, since an epoch which it is impossible to fix, but which was certainly very remote. This race—the Maya—possessed a civilisation, *sui generis*, and entirely unique on the North American con-

tinent, the focus of which had already shifted to the high valley of Mexico, long before the Spaniards first visited the country in the sixteenth century, leaving the towns of Uxmal, Palenque, Utatlan, and the others in the southern region, in ruins. What devastating influences produced this movement of an entire people, is not known, and the length of time occupied by it, is problematical, though it must have extended over centuries, ebbing and flowing intermittently. The conflicting traditions as to the direction from which tribes, law-givers, and priests arrived in Anahuac are doubtless owing to distinct movements, at different times, of the southern peoples, in their wandering search for a new and permanent abiding place. These early migrations from south to north, were succeeded, during the period, commonly termed the Middle Ages, by a counter-movement, and the northern tribes began to return southwards, conquering the different peoples they encountered. Although some of the peoples had preserved much of the culture bequeathed them by their forefathers, there was no uniform civilisation existing among them, save in the case of the Toltecs.

The Toltecs left their country called Huehuetlapallan, in the vague north-west, in the year 554 A.D. and, after one hundred and four years of migratory life, founded the city of Tollantzinco in 658, whence they again moved

in 667 to Tula, or Tollan; it is from this date that their monarchy which lasted three hundred and eighty-four years, is reckoned.[1] According to Torquemada, the Chichimecas followed within nine years after the extinction of the Toltec sovereignty, but Clavigero's calculation shows the improbability of this, for several reasons, the most convincing of which is the incredible chronology of their kings. Torquemada says that Xolotl reigned 113 years, his son lived to be 170 and his grandson 104 years old, while another king, Tezozomoc reigned 180 years! It is obvious that the Chichimeca period must either be shortened or the number of kings increased. After the Chichimecas, came the six tribes of Tlascala, Xochimilco, Acolhua (Texcoco) Tepanec, Chalco, and Tlahuichco, closely followed by the Colhuas or Mexicans, who first arrived at Tula in 1196 and, after several shorter migrations, founded Mexico-Tenochtitlan in 1325. The last tribe to come was that of the Ottomies, in 1420. Boturini believed that the tribes of Xicalango and the Olemchs antedated the Toltecs, but says that no records or picture-writings explaining their origin were discoverable in his time. From the foundation of Mexico, the form of government was aristocratic till 1352, when, according to Torquemada's interpretation of their picture-writings, the first king, Acama-

[1] Clavigero, *Storia del Messico*, vol. iv.

patzin, eighth predecessor of Montezuma II. was elected and reigned for thirty-seven years.

The Aztec civilisation which attained its highest development in Tenochtitlan and Texcoco, never reached the level of the Maya culture, nor did its cities contain any such admirable buildings as those of which the ruins still delight and mystify the traveller in Yucatan and Central America. Outside its few centres of learning and luxury, the numerous tribes under Montezuma's rule were dwellers in caves, living by the chase and in no way sharing the benefits of the Aztec polity. In morals and manners, the Aztecs were inferior to the Toltecs and, though they adopted and continued the civilisation of their predecessors, they were devoid of their intellectual and artistic qualities and turned their attention more to war and commerce, as the surest means for riveting their supremacy on their neighbours. When Cortes arrived, Texcoco and Tlacopan, though still calling themselves independent and ruled by sovereigns who claimed equality with Montezuma, were rapidly sinking into a condition of vassalage. The Aztec religion was likewise of a militant order; it was polytheistic and readily admitted the gods of conquered or allied nations into its pantheon. Upon the milder cult of the older religious systems they had adopted, these devotees of the war-god speedily grafted their own horrible practices of human sacrifices, which

augmented in number and ferocity until the temples became veritable charnel houses. With such a barbarous religious system draining their very life's blood and a relentless despotism daily encroaching on their liberties, it is small wonder that Cortes was hailed as a liberator by the subject peoples of Mexico.

The name of Mexico signifies habitation of the god of war, Mexitli—otherwise known as Huitzilopochtli. The name Tenochtitlan signifies a *cactus on a rock*[1] and was given to the new city because the choice of the site was decided by the augurs beholding an eagle perched upon a cactus that grew on a rock, and holding a serpent in its talons. The emblem of the cactus and the eagle holding a serpent became the national standard of Mexico and is displayed in the coat of arms of the present Republic.

The two islands of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco stood in the salt waters of the lake of Texcoco, separated from one another by a narrow channel of water, and in the beginning Tlatelolco had its separate chief; but in the reign of Axayacatl, the last king of Tlatelolco,

[1] Both Fernando Ramirez and Eufemio Mendoza have pronounced against this etymology of the word: another derivation is from *Tenoch*, the chief of the founders, and *tetl*, meaning a stone. I have followed Clavigero (*Storia del Messico*, tom. i., p. 168), and Prescott (*Conquest of Mexico*, tom. i., cap. i).

called Moquihuix, was overthrown, and the islands afterwards became united and formed one city with a single ruler. The city was joined to the mainland by three great causeways, so solidly built of earth and stone and having draw-bridges to span the canals which crossed them, as to excite the admiration of the Spaniards. The northern causeway, from the Tlatelolco quarter, extended for three miles to Tepeac, where stands the present shrine of Guadelupe; the causeway reaching to Tlacopan (Tacuba) was two miles long and the southern road, by which the Spaniards entered, extended for seven miles to Itztapalapan, with a division at the small fortress of Xoloc, where one branch diverged to Coyohuacan and hence caused Cortes to mention four causeways, which, strictly speaking, was correct.[1] While the width of these splendid roads varied, Clavigero says that all were wide enough for ten horsemen to ride abreast.[2]

All the earlier authorities practically agree in numbering the city's population at sixty thousand households,—by an obvious error the Anonymous Conqueror speaks of sixty thousand *people* which should, of course, be *families*. Zuazo, Gomara, Motolinia, Peter Martyr, Clavigero, and others give this estimate, hence it may be safely stated that the city's population was

[1] Robertson erroneously speaks of a causeway leading to Texcoco.

[2] *Storia del Messico*, vol. iii., lib. ix.

MEXICO BEFORE THE CONQUEST
FROM "CORTES'S LETTERS," PUBLISHED IN 1524

not less than three hundred thousand souls. Very contradictory appreciations of the beauty of the Aztec capital, the grandeur of its buildings and the merits of its architecture have been given by different writers. Prescott's marvellous picture of the ancient city is familiar to all readers of American history, and hardly less well known and rivalling the American historian's delightful pages, are the chapters of Sir Arthur Helps, praised by Ruskin for their "beautiful quiet English," in which he compares Mexico to Thebes, Nineveh, and Babylon, among the great cities of antiquity and to Constantinople, Venice, and Granada among those of modern times, not hesitating to declare that it was "at that time the fairest in the world and has never since been equalled.[1]

The distinguished Mexican scholar, Señor Alaman,[2] expresses his conviction that the city of Mexico contained no buildings of beauty or merit; that, aside from the royal palaces, the rest of the houses were adobe huts, among which rose the squat, truncated pyramids of the temples, unlovely to behold, decorated with rude sculptures of serpents and other horrible figures, and having heaps of human skulls piled up in their courtyards. He sustains this dreary appreciation by the argument that there would otherwise have remained some fragments of former

[1] *Hernan Cortes,* p. 108.
[2] *Disertaciones,* tom. i., p. 184.

architectural magnificence, whereas, there is absolutely nothing. These eminent writers seem unwilling to admit that Tenochtitlan may have been a wonderfully beautiful city and, at the same time, have possessed few imposing buildings and no remarkable architecture. The descriptions of Mr. Prescott and Sir Arthur Helps are masterpieces of word-painting that charm us, but they are based upon early descriptions, in which undue importance is given to architectural features of the city. It is, as Señor Alaman remarks, impossible that not a fragment of column or capital, statue or architrave, should have been saved to attest the existence of great architectural monuments, even though one hundred and fifty thousand men were diligently engaged for two months in destroying the buildings, filling up canals with the debris, and that finally, when the city came to be rebuilt, many idols and other large fragments of temples, were used in the foundations of the cathedral, which rose on the site of the great teocalli.

Palaces, such as Montezuma's was described by the Spaniards, may be vast in extent, with beautiful courts, gardens, and audience halls; they may be luxurious, and filled with curious and beautiful objects, but they add little to the picturesque or imposing appearance of a capital. The temples were sufficiently numerous, but none seem to have been lofty, and even the principal teocalli had but one hundred and

fourteen steps, so that its height was only remarkable by comparison with the great stretch of low, flat-roofed houses about it. Cortes describes to Charles V. the destruction of the city day by day, which he sincerely deplored as necessary to subdue it, but he does not mention any one building which he sought to save or whose destruction caused him special regret, as he must infallibly have done had he been burning an Alhambra or a Doge's palace, or been forced to blow up a Santa Sophia. It seems impossible that any one should seriously pretend that the waters of Texcoco's lake mirrored such façades as are reflected in the canals of Venice, or that there was a Rialto among the bridges, so hotly contested by the Spaniards. Orozco y Berra wisely reproves the comparison which Alaman draws between Mexico and Rome, as notoriously unjust. But between the dazzling word-pictures of Prescott and Helps on the one hand, and on the other, Alaman's depressing sketch of a squalid town of hovels, inhabited by bloodthirsty cannibals, there is still room for a beautiful city in which dwelt a sovereign, amidst surroundings of interesting splendour.[1]

[1] An entire school of present day investigators rejects the descriptions of Mexico, given by the early writers as entirely fanciful, and asserts that the city presented few points of superiority to an ordinary Indian pueblo of New Mexico or Arizona. Repudiation of what has come down

Even without conscious intention to mislead, it was inevitable that the Spaniards should fall into exaggeration in describing the city of Mexico: first, because they necessarily used the same terms to portray what they saw, as they would have used in describing Rome, Paris, or Constantinople; second, because the contrast between such Indian towns as they had seen and the capital was undoubtedly very great, and their long years of rough life, perilous voyages, and the absence, at times, even of shelter from the elements, made any large town where some system of order reigned and where there were houses having court-yards, gardens, and embroidered hangings, seem worthy to be compared with great cities, elsewhere seen, and dimly remembered; and, lastly, because Mexico was unquestionably a very beautiful city. It could hardly be otherwise in such a situation, and the Spaniards, not stopping to analyse wherein its charms lay, fell into the easy error of attributing them to architectural excellence and grandeur, which were really wanting.

The very ignorance and naïveté of the conquerors are good warrants for the truth of much

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to us from numerous observers, who contradicted one another about almost everything else but were in general accord concerning the aspect of the capital, its arts and degree of civilisation, assumes the existence of something resembling a conspiracy of misrepresentation among the early Spanish writers.

that they wrote, for, as they were illiterate men (even Cortes had but a scanty store of learning gathered during his brief course of two careless years at Salamanca) devoid of sufficient knowledge to invent and describe the Mexican laws, customs, religion, and institutions, the facts they state and in which they agree, are indubitable. The Aztec Empire possessed some highly developed institutions; to mention but one, there was the system of couriers or the post, which kept up daily and rapid communications between the capital and the provinces, and that, at a time, when no country in Europe possessed anything equalling it. Their religion was established with a regular hierarchy, and a calendar of festivals, which were observed with a really admirable ritual, marred only by the barbarity of certain rites. Their deities were gloomy and ferocious; fear was the motive of worship, human sacrifice the only means of placating the gods, and thus religion, which should soften and humanise manners and elevate character, was engulfed in a dreadful superstition that held the nation in a state of permanent degradation, with the result that the most civilised amongst the Indians of North America were, at the same time, the most barbarous. The perfect ordering of this system impressed the Spaniards, while its awful rites horrified them.

The state was well ordered, and in many

respects was governed according to wise and enlightened standards. The rights of private property were recognised and respected, its transfer being effected by sale or inheritance. All free men were land-owners, either by absolute possession or by usufruct derived from holding some public office in the state, and these composed the nobility; others held land in community, parcels being allotted to a given number of families whose members worked them in common and shared their produce equitably. Taxes were levied according to an established system and were paid in kind, thus filling the government store-houses with vast accumulations of all the products of the empire. Justice was administered by regularly appointed judges, who interpreted the laws and exercised jurisdiction in their respective districts.

The city possessed two large market-places, where all the natural and manufactured products of the country were brought for exchange. Cortes's description of the regulations governing these markets contained in his Second Letter of Relation to Charles V. reads not unlike an account of the great fair of Nishni-Novgorod, even in our times. The streets were regularly cleaned, lighted by fires at night and patrolled by police; public sanitary arrangements were provided and the city was probably more spacious, cleaner, and healthier than any European town of that time. Public charity provided

MEXICAN CALENDAR STONE

hospitals for the sick and aged and these institutions were in charge of the same clergy who murdered and devoured their fellow-men!

Separate arts and trades flourished, and the metal-workers, lapidaries, weavers, and others perfected themselves by a regular system of instruction and apprenticeship pretty much as in the guilds of Europe. The great public works, such as the causeways, aqueducts, canals with locks and bridges, were admirably constructed and, in the neighbourhood of the capital, were numerous. There was a fair knowledge of the medicinal and curative properties of herbs, barks, roots, and plants though, if the medicine men were skilled in the use of poisons, it seems strange that they did not rid themselves of the hungry invaders of their country at some of the feasts that were constantly offered them.

In the arts, the lapidaries, feather workers, and silversmits produced the best work. Mexican paintings, judged as works of art, are crude and primitive enough, but their real value and interest lie in the fact that they are chronicles in picture-writing, of which, unfortunately, too few have been preserved; ideas were rarely and imperfectly represented by this method, which was only serviceable for recording material facts. Music was the least developed of all the arts. Their solar system was more correct than that of the Greeks and Romans. The year was divided into eighteen months, of twenty days each,

with five complementary days added, which were holidays, but were considered unlucky, especially as birthdays.[1] There were regularly graduated social classes, the lowest being composed of peasant-serfs, called *mayeques,* who were bound to the land; above them came ascending grades until we reach the emperor at the top of all. Three features characteristic of the feudal system everywhere, were found. An overlord supreme in the central government, whose standard all followed in war and whose authority and person were regarded as semi-divine. Practically independent nobles or chiefs of tribes, levying their own taxes, holding peoples and cities in subjection, transmitting their titles by right of inheritance and ready to contend with the emperor himself on questions of etiquette and precedence. Many of them were his kinsmen and all were allied amongst themselves, thus forming an aristocracy of rank and power. Finally, a people reduced to practical serfage.

Sumptuary laws prescribed the dress of the different orders, and the regulations governing court-dress for different occasions were rigidly enforced; all removed their sandals in the emperor's presence, and even the greatest nobles covered their ornaments with a plain mantle when they appeared before him. The Aztec language was extremely polite and contained,

[1] Orozco y Berra, *Hist. Antigua,* lib. iv.

not only titles, but many ceremonious phrases of respect, and expressions of courtesy and deference. The crown descended in the same family, but a council of six electors, chosen during the life-time of the sovereign, met immediately after his death and elected a successor from among the eligible princes of the royal family.

Alongside these indications of an advanced civilisation are found several others which show a nation still in its infancy. They did not know the use of wax or oil for lighting purposes and they used no milk. They had no coinage; cacao nuts were commonly used as a standard of value and also gold dust, put up in quills, but usually commodities were exchanged. Sahagun mentions a sort of coin which the Mexicans called *quahtli* or eagle, but he does not describe it. Montezuma paid his losses at play with the Spaniards, in chips of gold, each of the value of fifty ducats; this piece was called *tejuele* but it does not certainly appear to have been a coin. There was no system of phonetic writing. They kept no domestic animals save rabbits, turkeys, and little dogs, all of which they ate. Their only cereal was maize and they had no beasts of burden. They knew neither iron, nor tin, nor lead, though the mountains were full of them, and their only hard metal was copper.

Even from the summary and incomplete indications here given, it may be seen that the Aztec state possessed many excellent insti-

tutions and the elements of an advanced civilisation and, despite the coexistence of certain limitations which have led some to doubt the development claimed for them, our interest in the origin and history of the mysterious races of Anàhuac is stimulated to wonder and admiration, for what we do know of their empire, and to boundless regret for the disappearance of all, save the few vestiges which remain to excite a curiosity they are inadequate to appease.

It is not required to endow Mexico with "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome," in order to admit that it was beautiful.

In the year 1519 when Cortes undertook the invasion and conquest of this empire, its throne was occupied by Montezuma Xocoyotzin, one of the six sons of the King Axayacatl, who was unanimously chosen by the electors to succeed his uncle, Ahuitzotl. The eligible princes, in that instance, were his own five brothers and the seven sons of the deceased emperor. Montezuma II. assumed the appelation of *Xocoyotzin* upon his accession, signifying "younger," to distinguish him from the elder, Montezuma Ilhuicamina. Prescott gives his age as twenty-three at the time of the election, in 1502, but I prefer to follow the authority of the Tezozomoc MS. given in Orozco y Berra, which states that he was born in 1468 and was hence thirty-four years old.

MONTEZUMA

FROM AN ILLUSTRATION IN MONTANIUS AND OGILBY

His early career was that of a successful soldier, from which he passed into the priesthood, rising to the high grade of pontiff. At that time he was held in great veneration by the people as one who received revelations from the gods, and his strict life was a model to his fellows. It is related that, when the news of his election to the imperial throne was brought to him, he was found sweeping the steps of the temple whose altars he served. His temperament was theocratic, he ruled sternly, and ill-brooked opposition or even counsel, but he was princely in recompensing faithful service. He had greatly embellished his capital, but the liberality that built an aqueduct, an hospital, and new temples in the city, cost the subject provinces dear, and Montezuma, being both despotic and a heavy tax-levier, was more feared than loved by his people and allies. Loving order, he understood the science of government, but his finer qualities were marred by his inordinate pride, and most of all by the ferocious superstition which finally lost him his throne and his life.

The appearance of the ships of Cordoba and Grijalba, and the fighting in Yucatan were quickly reported to Montezuma, whose superstitious mind was so effected by events in which he saw the disasters to himself and his people foretold by Quetzalcoatl, that his first impulse was to save himself by some enchantment or

incantation which should translate him to the abode, or *Walhalla,* of the famous kings and demi-gods of antiquity. The simultaneous apparition of a great comet in the sky, confirmed these forebodings and he gave himself entirely into the hands of his diviners or necromancers, who exercised all their resources of interpreting dreams, reading signs in natural phenomena and studying the heavens, to obtain directions for their sovereign in his perplexity. Many, whose dreams presaged evil, were starved to death or put to tortures; a reign of terror set in and none dared to speak in the sovereign's presence, while the prisons were full of luckless magicians, and death penalties were inflicted even upon their families in the provinces.[1]

As the proofs of the presence of the white strangers in their floating houses accumulated, despite Montezuma's reluctance to believe the reports which were repeatedly brought to him, he fell into a state of profound depression and, despairing of warding off the ominous visitors, he ordered costly gifts to be especially made, and he sent two envoys, Teutlamacazqui and Cuitlalpitoc to Pinotl, governor of Cuetlachtla, commanding him to provide in every way for the reception and entertainment of the supposed celestial guests. After the departure of Grijalba's men, the fears of Montezuma some

[1] Duran, cap. lviii. Tezozomoc apud Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., cap. ii.

what subsided and he persuaded himself that he had staved off the impending disaster. The governor of the coast provinces, however, had strict orders to keep watch and to immediately report any further appearance of the fearsome strangers.

The way for the conquest was already prepared and both the Aztec historians and the earliest Spanish authorities record, that for a number of years the belief that the hour of the empire's dissolution was at hand, had been steadily gaining ground, promoted by several events which were regarded as supernatural warnings of the approaching downfall. The lake of Texcoco had risen suddenly in 1510 and inundated the city, without any visible cause or accompanying earthquakes or tempest; one of the towers of the great toecalli was destroyed in 1511 by a mysterious conflagration, that resisted all efforts to extinguish it; comets, strange lights in the skies, accompanied by shooting-stars and weird noises were all interpreted by the astrologers as portents of gloomy presage. The miraculous resurrection, three days after her death, of the princess Papantzin, Montezuma's sister, who brought him a prophetic warning from her tomb, is reported at length by Clavigero.[1] Legal proofs of this event, which occurred in 1509, were afterwards forwarded to

[1] *Storia del Messico*, vol. i., p. 289.

the court of Rome. The princess is said to have lived for many years afterwards and to have been the first person to receive Christian baptism in Tlatelolco (1524), being henceforth known as Doña Ana Papantzin. Whatever may have been the exact nature of this occurrence, the reported miracle doubtless rests upon some fact which was interpreted by the Mexicans as supernatural.

Quetzalcoatl, whose dark prophecy above referred to, cast a shadow of apprehension over the glory of the Aztec sovereignty, was a Toltec deity, and was venerated as the god of the air, more especially identified with the east wind that brought the fertilising rains. He figures in different times and places, as a mortal man, a deified legislator and as a primitive divinity, thus rendering it difficult to separate the mythical from the real in his history. In Yucatan he was known under the name of *Kukulcan,* the etymology of which is identical in meaning with *Quetzalli-Cohuatl,* signifying a plumed serpent. The story of his residence amongst the Toltecs relates that he appeared as the chief of a band of strangers coming from unknown parts. He was larger than the Toltec men, white-faced and bearded. He wore a long white tunic, on which were black or dark-red crosses, which sounds something like a pallium. He taught the new religious virtues of chastity, charity, and penance; his religion was mono-

theistic, and he condemned war and forbade human sacrifices. He instructed the natives in the arts of agriculture, architecture, metal work, and mechanics; he also brought the Toltec calendar to the degree of perfection in which it was found among the Aztecs. The halcyon period of peace and plenty initiated by his beneficient influence came to a mysteriously sudden end and Quetzatcoatl left Tollan, accompanied by a small band of followers, for Cholula. There he remained for a period of twenty years, after which he descended towards the seacoast where, according to one legend, the waves opened before his steps to allow him to pass, while according to another, he seated himself upon a raft composed of serpents and, spreading his mantle as a sail, was wafted away to the unknown east. A third version of his end represents him as ascending his own funeral pyre, and as the flames and smoke rose, his heart in the form of a star was seen to mount into the skies where it became the planet Venus.

The identity of Quetzalcoatl remains an unsolved mystery. So numerous and striking were the analogies to Christian teachings presented by the Mexican beliefs and ritual, that the conviction has obtained amongst many, that this mysterious personage was no other than a Christian priest or bishop. The Mexican traditions concerning his appearance amongst the Toltecs, his teachings, his miracles, and his

final disappearance, seem to be hopelessly interwoven with legends of other deities; his personality became merged in that of other mythical characters, with a plumed serpent for his emblem; but there still remained a sufficient number of intelligible and authentic doctrines and practices traceable to him, to argue their Christian origin. Quetzalcoatl was feared by the Aztecs because of the wide-spread belief in the prophecy attributed to him, that one day he, or his descendants, would return to reclaim his rightful heritage and establish his dominion over the land. He was to return as an avenger, hence the object of the cult paid him was to propitiate his wrath, though the rites celebrated in his honour did violence to his humane teachings. The description of the bearded white men who had arrived on his coasts in winged and floating houses, persuaded Montezuma that the second coming of Quetzalcoatl was at hand. Within the inflexible circuit of his superstitions, his tormented soul turned and turned in hopeless perplexity. Restrained by his fears, he did not dare to use his power to crush the handful of strangers who troubled the peace of his realm. His royal allies and nobles were called into daily council from which no decision issued. The greater number were of the opinion that if the strangers were gods, it was useless to resist them; if they came as envoys of a foreign sovereign, they should be received as such, while

if they showed hostile intentions, they could be easily crushed at the emperor's convenience. Only Cuitlahuac, the lord of Itztapalapan, with prophetic foresight dissented from this view and urged the immediate destruction of the unbidden guests before they could work the nation any evil.

CHAPTER III

ALLIES OF THE SPANIARDS

Arrival at San Juan de Ulua—Marina—Embassies from Montezuma—Founding of Vera Cruz—At Cempoalla Missionary Methods

FOUR days were employed by the voyage from Tabasco to San Juan de Ulua, during which time those of the officers and men who had accompanied the previous expeditions along that coast under Hernandez de Cordoba, or Grijalba, were busy recognising and pointing out to their companions the different places familiar to them.

Puertocarrero while listening to these reminiscences recalled an old ballad of Montesinos:

Cata Francia, Montesinos,
Cata Paris la Ciudad,
Cata las aguas del Duero,
Do van á dar en la mar.[1]

[1] Here is France, Montesinos,
And here the city of Paris,
Here flow the waters of Duero,
On their way to the sea.
A popular song of those times, which is published in Duran's *Romances Caballerescos y Historicos.*

Turning to Cortes he added: "But I say, you should look for rich lands and know how to rule them." Cortes answered: "May God give us such fortune in warfare as to the paladin Roland, and as for the rest, with such knights as you and these gentlemen for my companions, I shall know very well what to do."

The ships cast anchor at San Juan de Ulua on Holy Thursday the twenty-first of April at midday.[1] The pilot Alaminos chose a favourable anchorage, where the vessels would be protected from the norther, a wind much dreaded of mariners on those seas. Many Indians were seen crowding the shores, and within half an hour two large canoes filled with people put off and approached the commander's ship. They asked by signs to see the chief, for Aguilar knew no Mexican, and the Maya tongue was not intelligible to the Indians. The Spaniards made out that their visitors had been sent by the governor of the province to inquire who they were and whether they intended to remain there or to proceed farther. The Indians were invited on board and regaled with food and wine, and it was explained to them that the Spaniards would land the following day; the visit concluded with a friendly exchange of the usual presents and the natives left as they had come.[2]

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. xxxvi.

[2] Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. xxv.; Bernal Diaz, cap xxxviii.

On Good Friday the Spaniards landed and formed a camp. The land along the coast was level, save for some low hills formed by the drifting sands that were constantly shifted by the frequent northers. Cortes placed his batteries in such wise as to defend his camp from possible attack, though the Indians were most friendly and helped his men in building huts, felling trees, and other necessary labour, besides supplying woven mats, cotton hangings, and carpets of their own manufacture. The site was a badly chosen one, for it was low and was surrounded by stagnant swamps that bred malaria. Another pest, from which there was no escape by day or night, was the insects. Every creature that crawls or flies, or buzzes, bites and stings, infested the coast. The natives supplied the camp with turkeys, fish, and various dishes of their own cooking, besides fruits and vegetables of the country, some of which the Spaniards tasted for the first time.

On Easter Sunday, an embassy from Montezuma, composed of Teuhtlili, the governor of Cuetlaxtla, and Cuitlalpitoc, who had before visited Grijalba in the same capacity, arrived in the camp. About four thousand persons, including some men of rank and the attendants who carried Montezuma's gifts to Cortes, accompanied the envoys. Approaching Cortes with much ceremony the ambassadors salaamed three times, after their fashion, touching the

earth with their hands and afterwards kissing them; they next incensed him, an act of homage they offered to their deities, their sovereign, and to persons of the very highest rank. Cortes responded becomingly to these demonstrations of respect, but before beginning to treat with the envoys, Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo said mass, at which the Aztecs assisted with grave interest.

Difficulty had already been experienced in communicating with the men who had visited the ships three days before, as Geronimo de Aguilar was unable to comprehend the Mexican speech. It was opportunely discovered that one of the slave women presented by the cacique of Tabasco was a native Mexican, and, having been in captivity in that province, she could speak the Maya language. She was thus able to understand Aguilar, who, in turn, translated into Spanish for Cortes. This woman, Marina by name, was the daughter of a chieftain of Painalla, whose unnatural mother had contracted a second marriage after her first husband's death and had consented to sell her daughter into slavery in order to transfer her inheritance to a son of her second marriage. Marina was delivered to some traders of Xicalango, who afterwards sold her in the province of Tabasco. Her family name was Tenepal and her Indian name, Malinal, was derived from *Malinalli* which is the sign of the twelfth day

of the Mexican month; thus her Christian name in baptism, Marina, was really derived from, or suggested by, her original Indian name. As the Indians could not pronounce the letter *R* there was practically no change of name, save that in her new and important position they gave her the *tzin,* which was a title of respect, and henceforth she was called Malintzin. The Spaniards corrupted this into Malinche and Cortes became universally known as the captain of Malinche. In the distribution of women at Tabasco, Marina had fallen to Puertocarrero, but when her value as an interpreter was discovered, she was promoted to the tent of Cortes, and Puertocarrero left shortly afterwards for Spain bearing the first letters and gifts to the Emperor. Marina became indispensable and all-powerful. She was unusually intelligent and quickly learned Castilian, so that Aguilar's intervention was no longer required and she alone acted as intermediary between the Spaniards and the Mexicans. She dispensed peace or war at her pleasure and held the fate of both parties in her hand. How faithfully and disinterestedly she played her part, we have no means of judging. She gave herself entirely to the Spaniards and was devotedly attached to Cortes, but whether she dealt fairly with the Indians in her handling of the important negotiations she conducted, may be doubted. Bernal Diaz declares that she was so capable that

they all held her to be like no other woman on earth, and that they never detected the smallest feminine weakness in her.[1]

On the memorable occasion of the first interview between Cortes and the envoys of Montezuma, Marina was instructed to explain that the Spaniards were subjects of the greatest and most powerful sovereign in the world, by name Don Carlos, whom many kings and princes held it an honour to serve as his vassals. As their monarch had long known of Montezuma's greatness, he had finally sent his envoy to enter into friendly relations with him, and in token of his good-will had sent him certain gifts. Cortes therefore begged that Montezuma would signify when and where he would receive him.

The Aztec envoys listened in perplexed surprise to this discourse, and to the request for an audience Teuhtlili somewhat haughtily exclaimed: "You have hardly arrived here and you already want to speak to the Emperor."[2] He then signed to the bearers to bring forward the gifts, which consisted of mantles of the finest cotton textures, almost rivalling silk in their delicate colouring and finish; articles of the marvellous feather-work, of such exquisite workmanship that it was hardly distinguishable

[1] *Hist. Verdad.*, cap. xxxvii., xxxviii.; Ixtlilxochitl, *Historia Chichimeca*, cap. lxxix.; Diego Camargo, *Historia de Tlascala.*

[2] Bernal Diaz, cap. xxxviii.

from the finest embroidery or painting, and certain ornaments of wrought gold. In exchange for these royal presents, Cortes delivered to the ambassadors a carved and painted armchair, a crimson cap, on which was a gold medal of St. George and the dragon, and a number of collars and other ornaments of glass beads. He arranged a display of cavalry manœuvres and caused the artillery to be discharged, all of which made an obvious impression on the envoys. There were several artists present, engaged in painting, on cloth, pictures of all they saw, especially the portraits of Cortes, Marina, and the negro slaves, to be shown to Montezuma. Teuhtlili observed that the gilt helmet of a soldier resembled the one worn by the Aztec war-god, Huitzilopochtli, and desired that Montezuma should see it. In giving it to him, Cortes asked that it might be returned to him full of gold-dust, to be sent to his sovereign Charles V. Although Teuhtlili discouraged all hope of Montezuma's admitting Cortes to his presence, he took his departure amicably, promising to return in a few days with the monarch's decision.

Montezuma, who was kept informed by daily couriers of what was happening in the Spanish camp, still hesitated between the two courses open to him. He continued to consult magicians, whom he summoned from Yauhtepec, Cuauhnahuac, Malinalco, and other towns of his

dominions, but the oracles delivered by these seers appear to have been as nebulous as such utterances usually are, and the Emperor ended by adopting two conflicting policies. Fearing that the strangers, whom he held to be demi-gods, would advance to his capital in spite of his prohibition, he gave orders for every honour to be shown them and for all their wants to be generously supplied. Simultaneously, he directed the magicians to proceed to the coast and, by the power of their incantations, to turn the invaders from their purpose and influence them to quit the country. The journey of these gifted men proved a fruitless expedition, and they returned to the capital to report that, as their charms and exorcisms produced no effect, the white men must be deities of a very superior order.[1]

Meanwhile Teuhtlili also returned bringing the presents from Cortes. Upon hearing that the latter persisted in his desire to visit the capital, Montezuma was more than ever perturbed, convinced that the fulfilment of Quetzalcoatl's prophecy was at hand. The only one of his counsellors who still advised resistance was Cuitlahuac, lord of Itztapalapan, who pronounced these prophetic words: "It seems to me, my lord, that you should not admit to your house one who will drive you out of it."[2] This

[1] Tezozomoc, cap. cx.; Duran, cap. lxxi.

[2] Ixtlilxochitl, *Historia Chichimeca*, cap. lxxx.

counsel prevailed and Teuhtlili was again despatched to the coast, accompanied this time by a man who was thought to bear a striking resemblance to Cortes, judging from the pictures drawn by the Emperor's artists. That the resemblance existed is proven by the fact that, on the man's appearance in camp, the Spaniards at once detected and commented on the likeness. Bernal Diaz calls this man Quintalbor, but he became later known as the Mexican Cortes.

The embassy was conducted with the same formalities and was accorded the same reception as on the former visit. More presents from Montezuma were offered, amongst which two pieces of the metal-worker's craft excited special admiration. One was a golden sun, elaborately decorated with scroll figures and representations of certain animals, probably the signs of the Mexican zodiac, that weighed more than ten marks. The other was a similar piece of silver, representing the moon, and weighing fifty marks.[1] They are described as being as large around as carriage wheels, and the Spaniards estimated their value at twenty-five thousand

[1] Señor Clemencin, sometime secretary of the Royal Academy of History, has carefully computed the values of the different Spanish coins of the period. The *castellano*, according to his estimate, was equivalent to eleven dollars and sixty-seven cents of American money. The silver mark was equal to eight ounces.

castellanos' worth of metal alone, exclusive of the marvellous workmanship, that would double their value in any market of Europe.[1] The soldier's gilt helmet was also returned filled with the desired gold-dust.

The message from Montezuma, though veiled in smooth language, was equivalent to a positive refusal to allow the Spaniards to approach his capital. He professed himself highly pleased to have news of such a great monarch as the King of Spain, and to enjoy his friendship and, as a proof of his satisfaction, he would be glad to provide the Spaniards with everything they required as long as they remained in his dominions. Teuhtlili concluded by saying, that, as Montezuma could neither descend to the coast nor could Cortes, on account of the many obstacles which he enumerated, make the long and perilous voyage to the capital, it would be impossible for his sovereign to receive him.

If Montezuma was a past master in the arts of diplomacy, Cortes was no less skilful in dissimulating. He accepted the presents, giving some of his usual trifles in return, and quietly reiterated his demand for an audience of the Aztec sovereign. He reminded Teuhtlili that, having crossed so many leagues of ocean for the sole purpose of delivering his King's message,

[1] Herrera, dec. ii., lib. v., cap. v.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xvii.; Bernal Diaz, cap. xxxix.; Gomara, cap. xxvii.; First Letter of Relation.

he was not to be deterred by the difficulties of a journey overland to the capital, nor would he dare to return without having accomplished the mission on which he had been sent. The unfortunate envoy reluctantly agreed to carry this message to Montezuma, while his companion, Cuitlalpitoc, remained in the Spanish camp to superintend the daily supply of necessary provisions.

The discomforts of the camp increased as the month of May advanced, and some thirty men had already died. Cortes therefore despatched Francisco de Montejo and the pilots, Anton de Alaminos and Juan Alvarez, with two vessels, to seek a more sheltered harbour for the ships and a more salubrious site for a permanent settlement. During the ten or twelve days' absence of this expedition a most significant and illuminating event occurred in the Spanish camp. Prince Ixtlilxochitl, the pretender to the throne of Texcoco, secretly sent his agents to welcome Cortes and offer him the customary presents. The emissaries of the ambitious pretender acquainted Cortes with the discordant state of affairs in the Aztec empire, soliciting his help to overthrow the tyrant and liberate the enslaved peoples.[1] Other malcontents also furnished him, at this time, with exact information concerning the position of the capital and

[1] Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chichimeca,* cap. lxxx.

the approaches to it, explaining to him, by means of ancient picture-writings, the prophecy of Quetzalcoatl, and voicing the complaints of those provinces that had been subjected by force to Montezuma's rule and only waited a propitious occasion to free themselves from his oppression.[1] With consummate patience, Cortes collected information from these and other sources that made him master of the situation, and his plan for conquest was being carefully and sagaciously formed while his followers wrangled over the division of the spoils, indulged in desultory trading with the natives, and were absorbed in the usual trifling occupations of an idle camp.

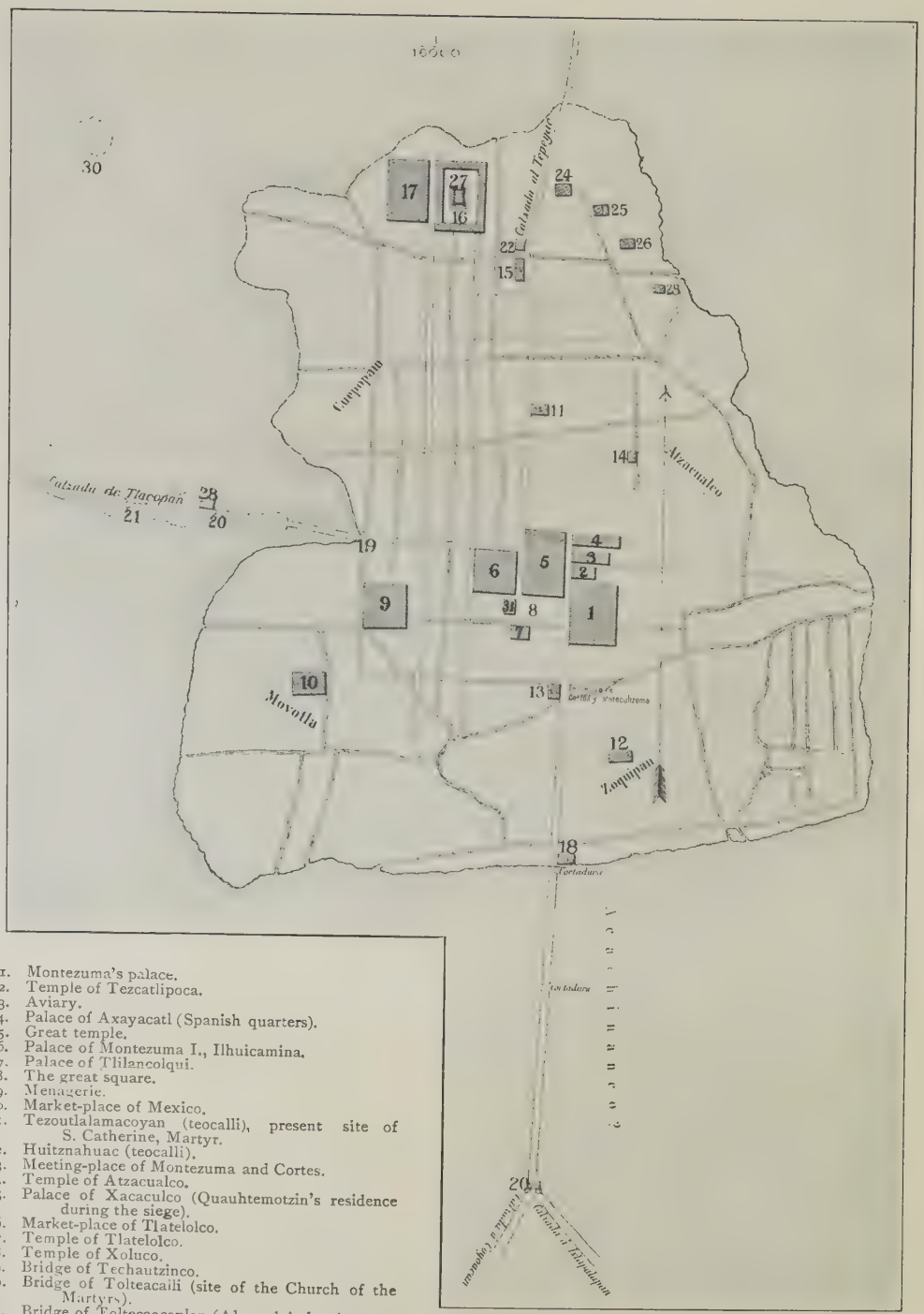
A noticeable change took place in the disposition of the Indians; provisions suddenly became scarcer and dearer. Within eight or ten days after his departure, Teuhtlili reappeared bringing more presents and four large green stones resembling emeralds, which were highly esteemed by the natives, but were of small intrinsic value. Bernal Diaz estimated the value of the gold brought at this time, at three thousand pesos. The message from Montezuma was a flat refusal to receive Cortes or to permit him to advance: Montezuma declined to receive or send any further messages on the subject.

[1] Orozco y Berra, *Conquista de Mexico*, tom. iv., p. 139.

While Teuhtlili was in camp, the Angelus rang out, and the Spaniards uncovered and knelt to recite the customary prayers before the wooden cross they had set up. In response to the envoy's inquiry as to the meaning of this devotion, Cortes directed Fray Bartolomé to explain the doctrines of the Catholic faith to the Mexicans. The friar's discourse was lucid and exhaustive, and at its close he presented Teuhtlili with a cross and a small image of the Blessed Virgin and Child, which he asked him to deliver to Montezuma, and to explain to the Emperor the sense of what he had just preached. Teuhtlili promised to do this and left the camp for the last time that same evening. The next morning the Spaniards found themselves abandoned, all the Indians having disappeared in the night, leaving them destitute of provisions.[1]

The sudden disappearance of the Indians from the camp, besides cutting off the supplies, roused apprehensions that a hostile attack was imminent. Strict attention was paid to the defences, and the Spaniards were constantly on the alert against a possible surprise. Their fears were not realised however, and three days after the departure of Teuhtlili, five strange Indians, wearing an entirely different dress from the Mexicans, appeared in camp saying

[1] First Letter of Relation: Bernal Diaz, cap. xi.; Gomara, cap. xxvii.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xviii.


Tacuba
Calzada de Tlacopan
Tlatelolco
Tepeyac
Tacuba
Iztapalapan
Tortadura
Mexicaltzinco
Tlacopan
Mexicaltzinco
Xoloc
Nonohualco
Tlatelolco
Tlilancalqui
Tlatelolco
Tlacopan
Mexicaltzinco
Tlatelolco
Tlacopan
Mexicaltzinco
Tlatelolco
Tlacopan
Mexicaltzinco

they belonged to the tribe or nation of the Totonacs and had been sent from their chief city of Cempoalla by their ruler to seek the friendship of Cortes. Two of the five spoke the Nahua or Aztec tongue, so the conversation was carried on through Marina. The Totonacs said they would have come sooner but for fear of the Mexicans, who had only recently conquered their country and held them in subjection. They proposed an alliance with Cortes, by whose aid they hoped to throw off the Mexican yoke. Cortes received them kindly, listened attentively to all they told him, and, after informing himself concerning the exact whereabouts and the resources of their country, he dismissed them with presents for their chief, saying he would soon come to Cempoalla to visit them.

Montejo and his companions had returned after an absence of twelve days, and reported that they had found a better harbour and a more suitable position for the camp, where there was plenty of fresh water. This place was some twelve leagues to the north of San Juan de Ulua, in the vicinity of a town called Quiahuiztla, and thither Cortes gave orders to transport the camp.

This order was not received with unanimous approval, and proved the signal for an outbreak of the dissension that had for some time been silently brewing in the camp. The men were divided into two parties, one of which was in

favour of scrupulously fulfilling the instructions of Diego Velasquez and of returning to Cuba with what treasure they had collected. The other group, though doubtless unconscious of the schemes forming in the brain of Cortes, was in favour of establishing a permanent colony and, in any event, was ready to follow their commander. The position of Cortes was no easy one; even the valuable spoil he had collected, if turned over to Velasquez, would not suffice to appease his resentment, while such a proceeding would leave him ruined, both in fortune and reputation. The glimpse he had obtained of the wealth of Mexico, and his increasing knowledge of the weakness of Montezuma's state, encouraged a daring project of conquest which he hoped to successfully carry out. By uniting to himself all the rebellious and discontented elements in the empire and boldly raising the standard of revolt, native allies would flock to him.

The case as stated by the partisans of Velasquez was the common-sense one. They claimed that the expedition had been sent by the governor's authority, fitted out largely with his money, for certain defined purposes. These purposes had been achieved as far as it was possible to accomplish them and, thus far, his instructions had been obeyed. The course laid down had been followed, the Spanish prisoners in Yucatan had been found, the Gospel had

been preached in various places to the natives, with whom profitable trading relations were established, and they had amassed an imposing quantity of treasure which it was now their duty to carry back to Cuba. They urged that thirty-five men were dead of wounds and the pestilential climate, that others were ill, while all were without provisions and exposed to the certainty of an attack by the Mexicans, who had doubtless retired for the sole purpose of uniting an overwhelming force to crush them. They demanded that the expedition should return to Cuba at once.

Cortes replied to these representations with great moderation. His opinion was that they would be ill-advised to abandon the country now that they had obtained a foothold in it; it was necessary to explore somewhat farther, so as to make a satisfactory report concerning the land, its resources, and its inhabitants. As for the loss of thirty odd men, he reminded them that this was a suprisingly small number, since in all warfare some must fall, and that they should rather thank God for His protection. The want of provisions need alarm no one, for there was always plenty of maize in the fields near by. The well-pondered words and the calm manner of the leader somewhat tranquillised the growing agitation and even won him some adherents; Puertocarrero, the Alvarado brothers, Olid, Escalante, Avila, and Francisco de Lugo, who

were the chief partisans of Cortes, worked secretly amongst the soldiers to win them to their views. Their principal argument was an appeal to the soldiers' past experience of the cupidity of Diego Velasquez, reminding them that he invariably took the lion's share of everything for himself, leaving the men who had risked their lives in perilous adventures as poor as they were in the beginning. This, they assured the soldiers, would repeat itself if they were to return now to Cuba with the treasure they had collected. They proposed, therefore, that a permanent settlement should be founded, of which Cortes should be elected captain by a popular vote. The partisans of Velasquez were not slow to hear of these manœuvres and promptly presented themselves in a body before the commander, demanding that the original instructions of the governor be fulfilled to the letter. Cortes replied that he would on no account disobey his superior's orders, and forthwith commanded the ships to be got ready for everybody to embark the next day for Cuba.

Such ready compliance nonplussed the friends of Velasquez and left them in a state of perplexity, for, having so easily obtained what they asked, they were no longer so sure that they wanted it. The adherents of Cortes then shifted their ground. They held a conference in which it was declared that, as Spaniards, their first duty was to their King; as they already held

practical possession, in the royal name, of a strip of rich coast-land, over which the banner of Castile floated, they were bound to secure it and, instead of returning to Cuba where Velasquez and Cortes would merely divide the profits of the expedition between themselves, they should found a town and establish the King's jurisdiction in this new country. They forthwith entered a counter-protest to the commander, declaring that the service of God and of the King forbade the abandonment of the country, and formally demanding that he, as captain of the expedition, should found a settlement and name the necessary municipal officers from amongst them according to Spanish custom; in case of a refusal, their intention was to denounce him to the King. Cortes deferred his answer until the following day. It was difficult for the opposing party to combat the high patriotic and religious stand their adversaries had adroitly taken, nor does it appear that any open attempt was made to do so. The conversion of the Indians to the true faith, the extension of His Majesty's dominions—these were high purposes which it would ill-become good Catholics and loyal subjects to oppose.

At the appointed hour on the following day, the last act of this historic comedy was gravely performed. Addressing the assembled men, Cortes declared that his sole wish was to serve his sovereigns, at no matter what cost or loss

to himself; he felt bound to accede to the will of the majority of the members of the expedition and he therefore proceeded to appoint the necessary officers of justice to carry on the government of the new colony. Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero and Francisco de Montejo were named alcaldes; Juan de Escalante, alguacil mayor; Cristobal de Olid, quartermaster-general; Alonso Alvarez, procurator-general; Gonzalo Mexia, treasurer; Alonso de Avila, accountant; Pedro and Alonso de Alvarado, Alonso de Avila, and Gonzalo de Sandoval, regidors; Diego Godoy as notary. The elaborate name of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz[1] was given to the new settlement, the "rica" being suggested by the rich character of the soil and the "Vera Cruz" by the date of their landing, which was a Good Friday, a day when the holy cross is especially venerated.

The legal formalities so scrupulously observed were a trifle farcical in this particular instance, and Cortes doubtless listened to the reading of the "requirements" with a solemn exterior, but with his tongue in his cheek. He resigned the authority he had received from Velasquez, the royal governor of Cuba, into the hands of the municipal authorities he had himself, in response to the popular demand, appointed, and who thereby likewise became royal officials.

[1] "Rich City of the True Cross."

They in their turn exercised their newly acquired powers, to elect him captain-general and chief justice of the new colony and thus, by due form of law, Cortes found himself, within twenty-four hours after his abdication, installed as the recognised dispenser of civil justice and as military commander. He showed a becoming reluctance to accept the nomination and finally had all the appearance of yielding to an irresistible expression of the popular will. Bernal Diaz quotes to the point an old Spanish proverb: *"Tu mi lo ruegas y yo mi lo quiero."* [1]

The partisans of Velasquez, though in a minority, still argued that the election was irregular, because they had not taken part in it, nor had it been confirmed either by the Jeronymite fathers or the governor of Cuba. This incipient sedition was characteristically met, by Cortes offering as many as were dissatisfied, permission to re-embark and return to Cuba, while he demonstrated the reality of the new state of things, by ordering the arrest of Juan Velasquez, Diego de Ordaz, Pedro Escudero, and others of the more active agitators, who were forthwith imprisoned on the captain's ship. This drastic move had the desired effect on the waverers.[2]

[1] Literally "You ask me to do what I want to do."

[2] First Letter of Relation: Bernal Diaz, cap. xlii.; Gomara, cap. xxx.; Las Casas, lib. iii., cap. cxxii.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xviii.

In the distribution of the municipal offices, Cortes was careful to include several of the men of the opposing faction. Pedro de Alvarado was despatched inland with one hundred men, ostensibly to collect provisions, but also to divide the forces of the malcontents by eliminating some of them temporarily from the camp. This detachment visited several places in the government of Cuetlaxtla, where they discovered on all sides evidences of recent human sacrifices. The inhabitants almost invariably abandoned their villages on the approach of the Spaniards and fled. A goodly supply of grain and other provisions was obtained and the expedition was welcomed back to camp, where its members regaled their companions with accounts of the horrible vestiges of cannibalism they had seen.[1]

During the absence of these men, Cortes had employed his most engaging arts to win over his opponents. The last to hold out were Diego de Ordaz, and Juan Velasquez de Leon, who was a kinsman of Diego Velasquez. With the final adhesion of these two, all open dissension ceased and Cortes was undisputed master of the situation. He carried out his purpose of transporting the settlement to the site recommended by Montejo, sending the sick and wounded on board the ships, which also carried the heavy

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. xliv.

guns and provisions, while he, at the head of some four hundred men, marched northwards along the sandy beach. Leaving these dreary wastes, the expedition gradually advanced into the rich, rolling country behind Vera Cruz, where forests of palms afforded a grateful protection from the tropical sun. Amidst the dark foliage of these virgin forests, gorgeous orchids and flowering creepers vie in the brilliancy of their colouring with the gaily plumaged birds of the parrot species which inhabit the dense world of verdure overhead. Game abounded and those of the men whose exuberant forces were not exhausted by the fatigues of the march, even engaged in chasing the deer, which roamed in herds through sylvan defiles and over verdant uplands.

The country was found to be everywhere deserted, but the evidences of human sacrifices and cannibal feasts were frequent. During the march, twelve Indians of the Totonacs appeared, bringing provisions and reiterating their cacique's invitation to visit him at Cempoalla. Cortes received these overtures with satisfaction and sent six of the messengers back to announce his acceptance of the invitation, while the other six remained to act as guides. Just before reaching the town, twenty of the principal citizens came out to receive Cortes, saying that their chief was unable to come in person, but was awaiting his arrival in the town. One of

the Spanish horsemen who had ridden ahead, came galloping back and announced in great excitement that the walls of the houses of the city were all of silver. Gomara observes that, in the excited state of their imaginations, everything that glistened in the sun seemed to the Spaniards gold or silver.

The town was *en fête* for the entrance of the guests, and its streets were thronged with people, both men and women, who mixed with the Spaniards without a sign of fear. Both sexes were dressed in garments of coloured cotton stuffs, the men wearing loin-cloths and long mantles, somewhat in the Moorish style, while many of the women of the upper classes were arrayed in embroidered and painted draperies that fell in graceful folds from the neck to the feet; ornaments of gold were common, and the beautiful head-dress of many coloured plumes and the profusion of flowers, for which the Indians cherished the highest appreciation, served to enhance the natural beauties of form and feature, which all early visitors to America ascribe to the inhabitants. The cacique appeared at the entrance of his palace, supported by two attendants, for he was so fat he could hardly walk alone. The Spaniards nicknamed him *el cacique gordo* or the fat chief. After the customary incensing and salutations, Cortes embraced the cacique, who made a speech of welcome. The Spaniards were lodged in the

temples and served with an elaborate repast.[1] Notwithstanding this friendly reception, Cortes took the precaution of having his guns in readiness for any possible emergency and of strictly forbidding any of his men to leave their quarters or to separate themselves from the others.

The cacique offered his guest a modest present, meekly apologising for its poverty by saying that it was all he had. The difficulties of communication were doubled, for the conversation passed from Spanish into Maya, thence into Nahua or Mexican, and finally into the Totonac language, but it seems not to have been less intelligible or satisfactory on that account. Cortes graciously accepted the cacique's gift and said that in return for it he would gladly render him what services he could, for he came there as the envoy of the most powerful monarch in the world to administer justice, punish tyrants, and to abolish human sacrifices. The cacique needed no further encouragement to disclose his grievances against Montezuma, who tyrannised over him and his people, and afflicted them with numberless vexations. He received the assurance that the days of such tyranny were now past, and that as soon as the new settlement at Quiahuiztla was established, the Spaniards would return to Cempoalla and help

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. xlv.; Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. xxxii.; Herrera, dec. ii., lib. v., cap. viii.

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for such disobedience, twenty persons were demanded as a propitiatory sacrifice to the offended deities.[1] Although the country through which the Spaniards had marched seemed to them to be deserted, they were closely followed by spies, their every movement watched and reported by couriers to Montezuma; nor is it likely that the overtures of the cacique of Cempoalla to Cortes were kept secret from the Mexican sovereign. The tax-collectors were acting on explicit orders from the capital, and in their open disdain of the Spaniards might be read the proof that Montezuma had adopted a hostile policy. At this turn of affairs, Cortes executed a daring stroke of diplomacy that displayed both the readiness of his invention and the strategic foresight he possessed in such a conspicuous degree. Informed by Marina of what was happening, he called the caciques before him, and reminding them that his sovereign had sent him thither to punish injustice and suppress human sacrifices, he ordered them not only to refuse the twenty persons exacted for sacrifice, but to immediately imprison the five tax-gatherers. The dismay of the caciques was such that, at first they could not conceive of such a daring outrage on the persons of the Emperor's representatives, but as Cortes remained inflexible,

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. xlvi.; Gomara, *Cronica*, cap xxxiv.; Herrera, dec. ii., lib. v., cap. x.; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., cap. vii.

the high-handed act was accomplished, one of the officers who resisted being even beaten. After this there was no turning back for the two caciques. They advanced rapidly on the road of rebellion and assented readily enough to their new counsellor's second suggestion, which was to publish an edict throughout their territories declaring that no more taxes were to be paid to Montezuma. The news of these revolutionary events spread rapidly throughout the empire, for the attendants of the tax-collectors had been allowed to escape when their masters were seized. Stupefaction greeted the news wherever it was published, and the edicts of the two rebellious caciques were listened to by ears that could scarcely trust their own hearing. Knowing full well that two small chieftains on the outskirts of the empire would never of themselves dare to so flout the mighty Emperor, it was universally agreed that such acts could only proceed from gods. From henceforward the Spaniards were given the name of *teules*,[1] or gods.

Having pushed the two caciques into open rebellion, and holding five high officers of the empire in his power, Cortes played his next move in the game. He opposed the intention of the Totonacs to kill the tax-collectors, and had two of the prisoners, who were closely

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. xlvii.

guarded by a mixed watch of Spaniards and Indians, brought before him secretly at night, without the knowledge of the Indian guards. Feigning ignorance of what had happened, he asked who they were and why they were held prisoners. The tax-gatherers answered that without his help the caciques would never have dared to lay hands on them. Cortes declared himself ignorant of the occurrence and greatly afflicted by their misfortune. He invited them to supper, which, after their prison fare, was doubtless acceptable to the dainty, rose-smelling gentlemen, accustomed to high living. During the meal he assured them he would arrange their escape in order that they might carry to Montezuma the assurance of his friendship. He added that had the Mexicans not abandoned the Spaniards, leaving them without provisions, the latter would never have visited the Totonacs. He urged them to fly at once and save themselves from death; as for their companions, he would likewise protect them from the caciques' murderous desires and, in due time, would find an opportunity to secure their release. The officers were not slow to act on such acceptable counsel, in fact Cortes provided men to row them across to a spot on the coast outside the boundaries of Cempoalla. Two messengers who owed him their lives were thus despatched to Montezuma with flattering assurances of goodwill, while three others remained as hostages.

The escape of two of the prisoners decided the caciques to sacrifice the remaining three, but Cortes again intervened, reproving them sharply for the carelessness of their guards, and, under pretext of rendering the flight of the others impossible, he put them in chains and sent them on board one of his ships. Once there, he threw all the blame upon the caciques, explaining to his prisoners that he had used the only possible means to rescue them, and promising to send them safely back to Mexico. It was obvious to the three Mexicans that he had saved them from the sacrificial stone; whether they penetrated his motives or not, does not appear.[1]

A conference composed of the caciques of Cempoalla and Quiahuiztla, and of other neighbouring chiefs who had been summoned, was then held to decide on their course of future action. The offence committed was beyond pardon, and from the Mexicans no mercy was to be hoped. Cortes pointed out to them the difficulties of their situation and advised them to ponder well their decision. Two opinions declared themselves in the conference, one in favour of throwing themselves on the Emperor's mercy, and offering reparation for the outrage, while the other was for a supreme struggle for independence, relying on the assistance of the *teules* to win. The latter opinion prevailed.

[1] Solis, *Conquista de Mexico*, lib. ii., cap. ix.

Before committing himself to the proffered alliance, Cortes was assured by the caciques that the united Totonacs could put one hundred thousand warriors in the field, a number exactly double his own estimate made later.

The standard of revolt was raised throughout the country, obedience to Montezuma was thrown off, and the further payment of tribute was refused. The caciques acknowledged themselves as the vassals of the King of Spain and the public notary, Diego Godoy, drew up the ratifications of the alliance.[1] The foundations of the new city of Vera Cruz were laid, and Cortes not only drew the plan of the town, but set an example to his men by labouring with his own hands at the construction of the buildings. Large numbers of Indians were ready to assist the Spaniards, and within a few weeks a presentable counterpart of a Spanish town was ready for occupancy. It possessed a church, a store-house for ammunition, a fort or block-house for defence in case of hostile attack, a municipal building, and a sufficient number of dwellings to house the inhabitants. It was destined to serve as the point of contact with the Spanish colonies in the islands, and with Spain; as a store-house for supplies, and a refuge for the sick and wounded during the campaign against the Aztec capital.

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. xlvii.; Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. xxxvi.; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 158 (note).

When the news of the outrage perpetrated on his tax-gatherers and of the insurrection in Cempoalla reached Montezuma, his first resolution was to send a punitive force to chastise his vassals and destroy the Spaniards; had he put his intention into effect he would have found Cortes in a position of doubtful security, while the Totonacs, still wavering between their hopes of liberty on the one hand and their fears of Mexican vengeance on the other, would have proved but feeble allies. The arrival of the two liberated prisoners caused the Emperor to relapse into the perplexity that characterised all his dealings with the Spaniards. Instead of an armed expedition to bring the Totonacs into subjection, he despatched another embassy, composed of two of his young nephews and four older councillors, bearing fresh gifts to Cortes. Highly satisfied with these first fruits of his diplomacy, the Spanish commander received the envoys and the present, renewing his protestations of regard towards Montezuma, and, as a proof of his sincerity, he delivered to them the three prisoners whom he still held on board his ship. When the question of the tribute due from the Totonacs and the punishment they merited for their rebellion was touched upon, Cortes answered that those provinces had passed under the jurisdiction and protection of the King of Spain and were henceforth freed from all obligation towards their former suzerain. He

added that he hoped soon to visit Montezuma, when these matters would be further explained. The result of this exposition of weakness on the part of Montezuma was to confirm the Totonacs in their allegiance to the Spaniards, as they interpreted the consideration shown to Cortes as meaning that the Mexicans feared him.

The missionary spirit of these pious adventurers did not slumber, and as the authority of Cortes established itself more absolutely over the Totonacs, the moment for suppressing idolatry and converting the natives to Christianity seemed propitious. He had meanwhile supported the caciqùe in some skirmishes with his hostile neighbours and, on the return to Cempoalla, the latter had presented eight young girls, daughters of chiefs, to the Spanish captains. Cortes profited by the occasion to declare that it was impossible for children of the true faith to accept pagan women and that before the Indian maidens could hope to share the companionship of his officers, they must renounce idolatry and become Christians. The parents of the girls seemed to view their conversion as an increased honour shown them, but when Cortes, presuming on the apparent indifference of the Indians to their religious belief, ordered the idols to be cast out and the temples purified for Christian worship, the cacique not only demurred but even assumed a threatening attitude.

Whatever else may be doubted, the religious sincerity and moral courage of Fernando Cortes are above impeachment. He was a stranger to hypocrisy, which is a smug vice of cowards, and if his reasons for acts of policy, that cost many lives, may be deplored by the humane, the honesty of his convictions may be reasonably impugned by none. Had the influence of his faith on his morals been proportionate to its sincerity, he might have merited canonisation.

Sixteenth-century Spain produced a race of Christian warriors whose piety, born of an intense realisation of, and love for a militant Christ, was of a martial complexion, beholding in the symbol of salvation—the Cross—the standard of Christendom around which the faithful must rally, and for whose protection and exaltation swords must be drawn and blood spilled if need be. They were the children of the generation which had expelled the last Moor from Spain, and had brought centuries of religious and patriotic warfare to a triumphant close, in which their country was finally united under the crown of Castile. From such forebears the generation of Cortès received its heritage of Christian chivalry. The discovery of a new world, peopled by barbarians, opened a fresh field to Spanish missionary zeal, in which the kingdom of God upon earth was to be extended and countless souls rescued from the obscene idolatries and debasing cannibalism

which enslaved them. This was the "white man's burden" which that century laid on Spaniards' shoulders.

Whatever the risks were, Cortes took them. He seized the cacique and several of the principal chiefs, ordering them to command their people to remain quiet and admonishing them that the first hostile act would be the signal for their instant death. Marina went amongst the people, calming their resentment and recalling the protection promised by the *teules* against the vengeance of Montezuma, an argument that also went far towards restraining the cacique from forfeiting the friendship of his new allies, without whose help destruction would inevitably overtake him. The idols at Cempoalla shared the fate of those at Cozumel and Tabasco, for, at a signal from the commander, fifty soldiers mounted the steps leading to the top of the pyramid on which the sanctuaries stood and, penetrating the blood-stained portals, they bore forth the hideous figures and hurled them to the bottom, where others were waiting to consign them to the flames. An altar was set up in the purified temple, mass was said, Fray Bartolomé delivered an instruction to the natives, and the ceremonies terminated as usual with a procession, in which some of the Totonac priests, clad in white robes, carried lighted tapers before the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Most of all were the Indians amazed

at the absence of any fulminating act of celestial vengeance on the desecrators of their gods, and evidences of the divine attributes of the Spaniards seemed to accumulate before their eyes.

The cacique having triumphed over his enemies with the help of the Spaniards and peace being restored, Cortes prepared to return with his forces to Vera Cruz. Juan de Torres, an invalided soldier, was left to guard the oratory at Cempoalla and to instruct the Totonacs in the observance of their new religion.[1]

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. li., lii.; Gomara, cap. xliii.; Herrera, dec. ii., lib. v.

CHAPTER IV

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SHIPS

Letters to Charles V.—The Velasquez Faction—Destruction of the Ships—The March to Mexico—The Republic of Tlascala

THE first news that greeted the Spaniards on their return to Vera Cruz announced the arrival that same day of a vessel commanded by Francisco de Saucedo, having on board seventy soldiers and two horsemen.[1] From Saucedo it was learned that Diego Velasquez had received the royal appointment of *adelantado,* with faculties to trade and colonise in the recently discovered countries. This last piece of intelligence gave Cortes material for serious reflection and obliged him to delay no further the necessary steps to obtain for his shaky authority some firmer foundation than the somewhat equivocal legal sanctions conferred by the infant municipality of Vera Cruz. This news of the royal favour shown Velasquez was bound to revive the slumbering activity of his partisans in Vera Cruz, who had found themselves constrained by superior numbers to acquiesce in the changed plan of the expedition. Velasquez

[1] Gomara, cap. xxxviii.; Bernal Diaz, cap. liii.

THE FLEET OF CORTES

FROM DE SOLIS, "CONQUEST DU MEXIQUE," VOL. I., PAGE 44

had friends at court, and would use every influence at his disposal to secure the forcible recall and punishment of Cortes and his adherents, so there was no time to be lost, nor did his usual perspicacity and promptness of decision fail the commander in this emergency. He decided to forestall any report Velasquez might send to Spain, by writing to the young King a full account of his expedition and everything that had happened since he left Cuba, and to send his despatch by his own messengers to Spain.[1] The new arrivals were acceptable re-

[1] This letter has never been found and by some was believed to have been afterwards suppressed by the Council for the Indies at the instance of Panfilo de Narvaez, or to have been taken by the French pirate Jean de Florin from Alonzo de Avila, and thus prevented from reaching the Emperor. It bore the date of July 10, 1519, and left Vera Cruz on the 16th of that month with the two envoys, Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero and Francisco de Montejo. It was in duplicate, as was likewise the letter of the magistrates of the newly founded colony, which was shown to Cortes before it was sent. Bernal Diaz, who was one of the signers of the joint letter, says that Cortes had omitted from his own letter the account of the expeditions of Francisco de Cordoba and of Juan de Grijalba. The letter of Cortes and that of the magistrates confirmed each other, as they were intended to do, and, according to Bernal Diaz, that of the magistrates was the more detailed of the two, hence it is, historically, the more valuable. The only important events which had happened up to that date, were the change in the character and objects of the expedition, and the founding of Vera Cruz, and on these points Cortes and the magistrates were in perfect accord.

The search for this missing letter having been given

inforcements to the little army and the opinion of the majority was in favour of no longer postponing the march into the interior. The municipal officers of the new colony who, it was evident, must stand or fall with Cortes, likewise prepared a despatch or *carta de relacion,* addressed to the Queen, Doña Juana, and the Emperor, Charles V., her son. To ensure a benevolent reception for these letters the truly heroic sacrifice of surrendering the entire treasure to the Emperor, instead of merely the royal fifth that belonged to him by right, was proposed to the members of the expedition. The officers consented at once, for they perceived that it was no time for half measures and, after putting the case before the men and explaining that by sending the whole amount an imposing present would be made up for the Emperor, a

up in despair, it remained for the perspicacity of Dr. Robertson to divine that, as the Emperor was about leaving Spain for Germany at the time the envoys from Vera Cruz arrived with the letters, they might still be found in some of the imperial archives; he accordingly undertook a search, for which all necessary facilities were obtained by the British Ambassador in Vienna. His efforts were crowned with a dual success, in that a certified copy by a notary public of the letter of the magistrates of Vera Cruz was discovered in the imperial archives, and, at the same time, the fifth letter of the *Relaciones* was also unearthed. The first letter appeared in print, for the first time, in the collection of inedited documents for Spanish history, published by Navarrete, in 1844, and from that time has taken its place in the complete series of five.

paper was circulated, which all who were willing were invited to sign. No constraint, however, was employed and any one who so desired, had but to claim his share, to receive it. The absolute ascendancy of Cortes over his men is demonstrated by the fact that not one refused his signature. A third letter to the Emperor was drawn up and signed by all the captains and men who were adherents of Cortes. Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero and Francisco de Montejo were chosen to bear these letters to Spain.

After assisting at a mass, said by Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo, the two envoys sailed on July 16, 1519, and they took with them the royal fifth of all the gold besides the other treasures. They were strictly enjoined to sail by the channel of the Bahamas and to carefully avoid Cuba, but they disobeyed this warning and

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The entire series of the five letters has been printed in Spanish by Don Enrique de Vedia in Ribadeneyra's *Biblioteca de Autores Classicos*, in 1852. The five letters were published by Don Pascual Gayangos of the Spanish Academy (*Cartas de Hernan Cortes al Emperador Carlos V.*, Paris, 1866), who also made an English translation of the fifth letter, which appeared alone in 1868 in a volume of the Hakluyt Society's publications. The five letters were published in a French translation by Desiré Charnay in Paris, 1896, and an English edition of the entire series, preceded by a short biography and accompanied by notes, was published by the author of the present work, under the title of *Letters of Cortes to Charles V.*, New York, 1908.

stopped several days at Marien, where Montejo had a property near by. They renewed their supplies at this place and showed some of the treasure to a servant, besides which, Montejo also wrote to a former overseer of his, Juan de Roja, who had meanwhile passed into Diego Velasquez's service. The governor thus learned of what was happening and promptly despatched a vessel to overhaul the messengers and bring them back, but he was too late. The envoys landed, early in October, 1519, but Benito Martin, a friend and agent of Velasquez, was already advised of their coming and lodged a complaint with the *Casa de Contractacion* in Seville, in which he described Cortes as a rebel against his superior's authority and asked for the arrest of the envoys and the sequestration of the letters and the treasure. He found a ready ally in Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos, who, as President of the Royal Council for the Indies, was omnipotent, and was a warm friend and supporter of Velasquez, with whose family his own was about to be connected by a marriage.

Peter Martyr, who was then at court and noted every circumstance of interest, mentions the arrival of the two envoys in December as "recent," which might mean that he had only recently heard of it. All authorities agree that they got a rough reception from the Bishop of Burgos, and only saw the Emperor in March,

1520, after many difficulties. The audience was at Tordesillas, where His Majesty was then paying a visit to his mother, Doña Juana, before proceeding to Santiago de Compostella. Peter Martyr, however, says that the Emperor had then already seen the gold and presents from Mexico, which confirms another authority, who states that while they were stopped by the Bishop in Seville, Martin Cortes, the father of Fernando, and an official of the Royal Council who was friendly, one Nuñez, contrived to forward duplicates of the despatches to the Emperor, accompanied by a memorial describing the Bishop's behaviour and his sequestration of the treasures. The Emperor was well impressed by the letters and ordered the gifts to be sent on to him. He was, however, so absorbed with business of importance prior to quitting the country for Germany to assume the imperial crown, that he left Tordesillas without giving a decision. The envoys followed him to La Coruña, and there exists in the archives of Simancas the deposition given under oath before Dr. Carbajal, member of the Royal Council for the Indies, by Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero dated, La Coruña, April 30, 1520. The memorial of Benito Martin is found, according to Prescott, in the collection of MSS. made by Don Vargas Ponce, sometime president of the Spanish Academy of History.

The departure of the two messengers from

Vera Cruz did not take place without opposition from the Velasquez faction, whose members revived their former complaints against the treacherous conduct of Cortes towards the governor of Cuba and even formed a plot to seize a brigantine, kill its captain, and escape to Cuba to inform Velasquez of the departure of the messengers carrying the treasure and the letters. Bernaldino de Coria, one of the conspirators, weakened at the last moment and betrayed the plot and those implicated to the commander. Cortes did not mince matters but promptly hanged Diego Cermeno, and Juan Escudero. The latter was the same alguacil who had captured him before the church in Santiago, where he had taken sanctuary during his quarrel with Velasquez, and had imprisoned him on the ship in the harbour. Gonzalo de Umbria had his feet cut off, and two hundred lashes were administered to each of the others except the priest, Juan Diaz, whose cloth protected him. Bernal Diaz reports that Cortes exclaimed when he signed the warrant for these punishments, "Who would not rather be unable to write, than to have to sign away the lives of men!" but the old soldier shrewdly adds, that he believes most judges, from the days of Nero down, have expressed the same sentiment.[1]

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. lvii.; Oviedo, *Historia de las Indias*, lib. xxxiii., cap. ii.; Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, lib. iii.,

The discovery of such a conspiracy amongst his followers gave Cortes grave cause for preoccupation, for it was manifestly impossible for him to set out on his great undertaking, without first assuring the loyalty of those he had to leave behind at Vera Cruz. It was clear that certain of the friends of Diego Velasquez merely bided their time, waiting and hoping for an opportunity to return to Cuba; others were impressed by the risks attending an expedition into an entirely unknown country where there was every reason to believe a dense and hostile population was preparing to dispute their advance. All were familiar with the fate awaiting prisoners of war, and there were few who did not shudder at the possibility of ending their days on the sacrificial stone and furnishing the festal meats at cannibal feasts. Cortes perceived there was but one effectual means to prevent further plots, after the restraint of his presence was removed, and to involve the fate of each member of the expedition in his success or failure, and that was to cut off all possibility of escape by destroying his fleet. He first took the precaution of sending Pedro de Alvarado with a large part of the army on ahead to Cem-

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cap. cxii. Bernal Diaz refers to the passage in Suetonius recording an exclamation of Nero: "Et cum de supplicio cujusdam capite damnati, ut ex more subscriberet, admoneretur quam vellem, inquit, nescire litteras" (lib. vi., cap. x.).

poalla, thus reducing the number of possible objectors to the contemplated measure.

The destruction of the ships is one of the most dramatic episodes in the eventful history of the conquest, and Cortes, in reporting it to the Emperor, assumed exclusively the credit of the heroic decision and its execution, but throughout his narrative he is chary of ever mentioning anybody but himself. Gomara naturally gives the same account, and Prescott accepts his version, as do other reputable historians. Bernal Diaz, who figures always as the great objector and corrector, contradicts this account very positively and says that the destruction of the ships was decided upon after a general discussion, and that Cortes was unwilling to accept any responsibility, either for their demolition or for their cost if there should later arise a necessity to pay for them to their rightful owners. He refutes with emphatic scorn Gomara's assertion that Cortes feared to tell the soldiers of his intention to push into the interior in search of the great Montezuma, exclaiming: "What sort of Spaniards are we, not to want to push ahead but to stop where we had no hardships or fighting?" The *Relacion* of Andres de Tapia (who was also an eyewitness) agrees with Bernal Diaz. Puertocarrero replied in La Coruña in the same sense as his companion Montejo (April 29, 1520), stating that the proposal to destroy all but three

of the ships came from the captains of them, who declared them to be unseaworthy, and even those three to be of doubtful value. Puertocarrero and Montejo sailed, as has been said, on July 16th, with the treasure and the letters which were dated July 10th, so that the discovery of the conspiracy and the punishment of its authors and the destruction of the ships all took place in those six days. Clavigero believes that Cortes induced some of the pilots to scuttle one or two of the ships and afterwards to come to him, representing the others as unseaworthy, from being three months in port.

Prescott sagaciously observes that "the affair so remarkable as the act of one individual, becomes absolutely incredible when considered as the result of so many independent wills" but the Mexican historian Orozco y Berra is doubtless right in believing that the idea of destroying the ships originated with Cortes, who adroitly suggested it in such wise and with such arguments, that it came back to him as a spontaneous proposal from the others, supported by the opinions of the pilots and ship-captains that the vessels were unsound. Such artifice was not alien to his diplomacy, for he usually contrived that he should appear to interpret the popular will as well as to serve the royal interests in all the undertakings his ambition prompted. He dazzled, cajoled, or bullied his men as occasion required; he also bribed them

at times, but he took counsel with few if any of them. To carry out his daring plan of destroying the fleet, he had need of confederates to execute it, and all the evidence before us points to the conclusion that he chose them wisely and in small number.[1] Puertocarrero and Montejo embarked for Spain in the flag-ship of the fleet, which had been spared, and the little band of adventurers found themselves isolated in a strange world, cut off from all possibility of retreat, as only one small vessel remained. The cordage, anchors, and other movable fixtures that might serve some future purpose, had been carefully removed from the condemned vessels and were stored in Vera Cruz. Cortes followed Alvarado to Cempoalla, where the news of the destruction of the fleet had produced consternation. Mutiny seemed imminent, and the opinion spread that the commander was leading them like cattle to the slaughter.[2]

In the presence of one of the greatest dangers that ever faced him, Cortes lost nothing of the presence of mind that never failed him. His address to the assembled men was a masterpiece of persuasive logic. He adopted his con-

[1] Prescott, *Conquest of Mexico*, tom. i., cap. viii.; Orozco y Berra, *Conquista*, tom. iv., cap. viii.; Bernal Diaz, cap. lviii.; MacNutt's *Letters of Cortes*, Second Letter; Alaman, *Disertacione, II.;* Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, lib. iii., cap. cxxiii.

[2] Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. xlii.

ciliatory rather than his authoritative manner, explaining to them, first of all, that the ships were his own property, and therefore their destruction was his loss. He next reminded them that the expedition had been increased by one hundred sailors, who would otherwise have had to be kept idle on board the ships while the others bore the brunt of the hardships and fighting in the interior; the vessels being unseaworthy, would have been of no service and, moreover, if their expedition against Mexico succeeded, they would not be needed, while if it should fail they would all find themselves too far from the seacoast to be able to avail themselves of ships. He closed with just the right note,—an appeal to their courage and cupidity,—offering, if there were, however, any so cowardly as to shrink from the dangers of the glorious enterprise, to send them back to Cuba in the one vessel that still remained. A wave of enthusiasm swept his hearers. Evoked by the hypnotic eloquence of their leader, the golden mirage of wealth and glory once more dazzled the eager eyes of the adventurers, and the assembly that had gathered in a spirit of mutiny, broke up with cheers and shouts of: "To Mexico! To Mexico."[1]

[1] Ixtlilxochitl, *Historia Chichimeca,* cap. lxxxii.; Alaman, *Disertacione, II.;* Bernal Diaz, cap. lix.; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., cap. viii.; Prescott, *Conquest of Mex.,* tom. i., cap. viii.

Juan de Escalante, alguacil mayor of Vera Cruz, was left in command of one hundred and fifty men, chosen amongst those least apt for the hardships of the long march, though capable of forming a sufficient garrison. Summoning the Totonac chiefs before him, Cortes formally presented Escalante to them saying: "This man is my brother, whom you must obey in whatever he commands you, and if the Mexicans attack you, have recourse to him for he will defend you." The chieftains swore obedience to the new commander, saluting him and offering him incense. The cacique of Cempoalla furnished two hundred pack-carriers to drag the guns and carry the baggage, in addition to fifty of his principal chiefs who were to act as guides and counsellors. Including several hundred warriors, the Totonacs numbered in all thirteen hundred men. Everything was ready for the departure from Cempoalla, when a messenger arrived from Escalante to inform Cortes that four Spanish ships [1] and appeared off the coast, which he had ascertained belonged to Francisco

[1] This expedition was composed of four ships carrying two hundred and seventy men, with horses and cannon, and had sailed from Jamaica towards the close of 1518, under command of Alonzo Alvarez de Piñeda.

Francisco de Garay sailed with Columbus on his second voyage. Las Casas speaks of his great wealth, and says that he had five thousand Indians solely to look after his pigs. He went to Spain as procurator for San Domingo, and returned as Lieut.-Governor of Jamaica. When the

de Garay, the governor of Jamaica. The conduct of their captains seemed to him somewhat mysterious, as they had refused to land. Fearing that the ships might carry a force sent by Diego Velasquez, Cortes hastily returned with a few horsemen to Vera Cruz, leaving Alvarado and Sandoval in command of the forces at Cempoalla. The ships had anchored some four leagues to the north of the settlement, and while Cortes and his followers were going thither they encountered three of Garay's men, one of whom was a notary charged to warn him that he was trespassing on the territories granted to Garay, and that he must withdraw from the coast. Cortes answered that if the commander of the expedition would meet him at Vera Cruz, they would discuss the question of their respective boundaries, but the notary replied that neither the captain nor any one else would land. Cortes took the three men prisoners and concealed his party in the shrubbery near the coast, hoping that some one else would land from the ships.

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news of the Cordoba and Grijalba expeditions became the excitement of the day, Garay sent out an exploring party under command of Diego de Camargo which discovered the Panuco region, and continuing thence about one hundred leagues towards Florida, finally returned to Jamaica. The Emperor Charles V. granted Garay faculties for further enterprise, and the title of *adelantado* of the new countries he discovered. Garay was one of the most cruel oppressors of the Indians and it was said of him that he came, not to populate, but to *depopulate*, Jamaica.

Seeing that no one came on shore he disguised three of his men in the prisoners' clothing and sent them to signal the ships for a boat. The stratagem was successful and, in response to the signals from the shore, a boat landed three or four armed men whom the band awaiting them in ambush immediately seized. The others who remained in the boats, seeing their companions overpowered, bent to their oars and returned to the ship. Cortes thus increased his force by the welcome addition of seven men.[1]

All preparations for the march being completed, and the Garay incident disposed of, Cortes left Cempoalla on August 16, 1519. Before setting out he addressed his men in the peculiarly winning and moving style, of which he possessed the secret. Their enterprise was undertaken first of all for the glory of God and the propagation of the Faith, and hence the divine protection would not fail them; the honour of the Spanish name was in their hands, and upon them depended the extension of the Spanish sovereignty over the great and rich country before them. All hope of retreat or succour being cut off, upon God's providence and their own brave hearts must their success depend. Bernal Diaz years afterwards wrote that his leader's phrases of honeyed eloquence

[1] Second Letter of Relation; Bernal Diaz, cap. lx.; Orozco y Berra, vol. iv., cap viii.

were beyond anything he could repeat. The response was neither slow in coming, nor doubtful; acclamations greeted the commander's words and amidst the farewells of the Totonacs, the troops marched forth across the luxuriant *tierra-caliente* and on up the first slopes of the lofty mountain chain of the Cordilleras that shuts off the valley of Mexico from the sea.[1] The first town in which they rested was Xalapa, situated on the slope of Macuiltepec. The scene had changed in character, for the glowing *tierra-caliente* with its luxuriance of tropical vegetation, feathery palms, and flowering parasites lay far beneath on the rolling plain that stretched to the azure waters of the gulf. The tropics had given place to the temperate zone, and the country was now covered with virgin forests of dark-foliaged oak, while the ever-ascending slopes of the Sierra Madre, were clothed with a sombre mantle of pines. Rising far above this inspiring landscape, towered the snowy peak of Orizaba, over the whiteness of whose immaculate summit a rosy glow was shed from the fires of its burning crater. Four days of marching, always higher and higher, brought

[1] The force numbered four hundred foot soldiers, fifteen or sixteen horsemen, and six pieces of artillery. The Totonac warriors were commanded by three chiefs, Teuch, Mamexi, and Tamalli. Prescott gives the number of warriors alone as 1300 and adds to them 1000 bearers. I have kept to the numbers given by Cortes, Bernal Diaz, and Orozco y Berra.

them to a town called Xicochimilco,[1] whose natural position for defence and well-constructed fortifications, Cortes reported at some detail to the Emperor in his second letter. Beyond this place the change in temperature from the *tierra-caliente* became very marked, and after passing the rugged defile called by Cortes, Paso del Nombre de Dios,[2] they marched for three days through a wild and forbidding country seared and tormented by prehistoric convulsions of the now extinct volcano, known as Cofre del Perote [3] where the cold was so great that several of the Indians, ill-clad and unused to such rigorous weather, perished. In the several towns where a halt was made, the cacique of each place received the Spaniards hospitably; in some instances because he was a friend of the Totonacs, and in others because he knew the strangers were on their way to visit Montezuma. Everywhere Cortes announced himself as the ambassador of the greatest sovereign in the world, to whom all the Indians must acknowledge allegiance; everywhere he denounced idolatry, human sacrifices, and cannibalism as contrary to the laws of the one supreme God and hence forbidden by the King of Spain; Christian doc-

[1] Identified with probability as the present town of Naulinco.

[2] Now called Paso del Obispo.

[3] Humboldt gives its height as 4089 metres or 13,314 feet above sea level.

trine was preached by Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo and in each town, a cross was erected which the Indians obediently promised to reverence after his departure.

Crossing the Sierra del Agua by a defile, to which the name of Paso de la Leña was given, because of the symmetrical piles of hewn wood found there, the Spaniards emerged into a vast stretch of fertile and well cultivated valley, called Caltanmic, in the midst of whose plantations of bananas and maize stood the handsome town of Xocotla that seemed to the Spaniards even larger and better built than Cempoalla. Xocotla was the residence of the lord of Caltanmic, whose name was Olintetl, a man of such immense size that he had to be supported by two of his kinsmen when he walked. The Spaniards promptly nicknamed him "the trembler" because he shook like a jelly. Though he provided for the wants of his self-invited guests, Olintetl's reception of them was somewhat wanting in cordiality. When asked if he were a vassal of Montezuma's, he answered with an air of surprise, "And who is not a vassal of Montezuma?" Cortes was not slow in explaining that he and his men were vassals of a far greater sovereign, whom many kings and princes held themselves honoured to serve. The cacique was not visibly impressed by these descriptions of a distant sovereign whom he did not know, and he replied, telling Cortes that Montezuma ruled

over thirty great vassals, each of whom could put a hundred thousand soldiers in the field; his magnificence and wealth were incalculable and his capital, standing in the midst of a lake, was the most beautiful of cities, and unapproachable save only with his permission, for his boats commanded the lake, and the causeways leading to the mainland were defended by his troops and provided with drawbridges. Cortes gleaned much information from the boasting Olintetl, which, though of a disquieting order, only served to stimulate his indomitable determination to advance.[1] Olintetl listened with impassive mien to the exposition of the Christian religion made by Fray Bartolomé and also refused the gold asked of him, saying that he would only give it if ordered to do so by Montezuma, who might dispose of all he possessed. Fray Bartolomé, perceiving the folly as well as the dangers of attempting to force unacceptable doctrine on the cacique, checked the missionary zeal of Cortes and dissuaded him from his intention to erect a cross at Xocotla.

Olintetl offered to send guides to conduct the Spaniards on their way to Mexico as far as the city of Cholula, without leaving Mexican territory. The Cempoallans gave just the contrary advice, declaring that the Cholulans were false and treacherous people, friends of Montezuma, and that the best road lay through the republic

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. lxi.

of Tlascala, with whose people the Spaniards should form an alliance. Cortes accepted the advice of the Cempoallans and despatched four of them as his messengers, to ask permission of the regents of Tlascala to pass through their territory.[1]

To ensure a favourable reception for his envoys, he sent gifts to the regents, consisting of a red Flemish hat, a crossbow, and a sword. He also gave them a letter couched in flattering terms, carefully instructing the messengers to explain its sense, as the Spanish document would only serve as a formal, if incomprehensible, credential, in the eyes of the Tlascalans.

More than the necessary time for their return having elapsed without anything being heard of his messengers, and the four days of repose at Xocotla having refreshed his men, Cortes marched to a town of some five or six thousand inhabitants called Yxtacamaxtitlan.[2] He described the fortress of this place in his Second Letter of Relation to the Emperor as "a better one than could be found in half Spain."[3] Here he determined to await the reply from the regents.

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. lxii.; Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. xliv.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xxvii.

[2] Ixtacmaxtitlan, in the present state of Puebla. For convenience' sake the town was removed from the hill-top in 1601 and built on its present site lower down.

[3] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 125.

Tlascala was an independent republic composed of four federated states, each ruled by its chief, while federal affairs were controlled by a senate[1] composed of the four rulers and their principal nobles. The Tlascalans were a brave and hardy people, well advanced in military science, who had preserved the independence of their mountain republic against the ever-encroaching power of Montezuma somewhat as the Montenegrins, in their mountain fastness, have ever successfully withstood the Ottoman sultans.

When the Spaniards came to understand more about the Mexican empire, it caused them no small wonder that Montezuma, with all his powerful allies, should nevertheless tolerate the existence of this small, hostile state in the midst of his own dominions. Andres de Tapia states in his *Relacion* that, in reply to his question to Montezuma as to why he did not crush the Tlascalans at one blow, the Emperor said: "We could perfectly well do so, but afterwards there would be no place left where our young warriors could obtain their military training, without going a great distance from here; we also constantly require these people to furnish victims for sacrifices to our gods." According

[1] Orozco y Berra objects to the word senate as inaccurately describing the form of federal council, and calls the governing body *señoria*. Cortes likened the system of government to those of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa.

to this declaration of Montezuma, the Tlascalans owed their continued independent existence to his interested toleration, rather than to their own ability to defend themselves.

Their state was so completely hemmed in on all sides that even commercial intercourse was cut off, and their chief pursuit was agriculture. They were deprived of the use of salt [1] and cotton-stuffs, since the former commodity was not found within their borders and the latter was not produced at such a high altitude.[2] Their warriors were the equals, if not the superiors of the Aztecs in the field, fighting with the same weapons and employing the same tactics. They were trained from infancy to detest the Mexicans as the hereditary foes of their nation, and the Cempoallans assured Cortes that he would find them ready and valiant allies against Montezuma.

Still the messengers did not return, and as some disquietude was even felt at their long absence, Cortes decided to advance. The fron-

[1] Called by the Indians "tequesquit." It is made from the saltpetre, which was largely found in the neighbourhood of Itztapalapan and Ixtapaluca (*Ixtabl* meaning saltpetre), and formed an important article of commerce, which, however, did not reach the Tlascalans on account of the permanent state of hostilities. As they were also cut off from the sea, salt had been for fifty years an almost unknown luxury amongst them; cotton which was a product of the *tierra-caliente* was for the same reason denied them.

[2] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 195.

tier of the republic was defined by a massive stone wall, nine feet high and twenty feet thick that extended for a distance of two leagues across the valley, effectually barring out all comers. Cortes described this wall as being built of "dry stones" but Bernal Diaz says the stones were held together by such a strong cement that it could scarcely be broken with pikes.[1] Two semicircular lines of wall overlapping one another in such wise as to form a passage ten paces wide and forty long, afforded the only opening. To pass through this narrow circuitous lane, between two high stone walls, from whose parapets armed warriors could rain down missiles on those below, was to march into a veritable death-trap. When the Spaniards arrived at this singular barricade they found it undefended, so they marched through and entered the republic without opposition.

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, Second Letter, p. 197; Bernal Diaz, cap. lxii.

CHAPTER V

THE SPANISH-TLASCALAN ALLIANCE

The Senate of Tlascala—Spanish Victories— Cruel Treatment of Spies—The Alliance—Effect on Montezuma —Cortes in Tlascala.

WHILE the events described in the last chapter were happening, the four Cempoallan envoys were conducting important negotiations in the city of Tlascala. They presented themselves at the city gates, wearing the insignia of ambassadors and were consequently conducted to the council chamber where they were regaled with a feast, after the Indian fashion, while the four overlords were assembling. Their reception was marked by the punctilious formalities prescribed by Indian etiquette and, after delivering the letter and the presents, the eldest of them addressed the Tlascalan lords, recounting the arrival of the *teules* at Cempoalla and the liberation, through their intervention, of that country from the tyranny of Montezuma. He repeated what had been told them of the power of the Spanish King, who had sent the strangers to Mexico, and explained, as best he could, the new religion that was being everywhere expounded to the people. In conclusion, he said that the Spaniards wished to visit Tlascala and

that it seemed to the Cempoallans an admirable occasion for the Tlascalans to form an alliance against their ancient enemy, Montezuma.

The four rulers listened to the envoy's discourse and, at its close, declared that they accepted the present sent them by the *teules,* but it would be necessary to deliberate before answering the proposition of the Cempoallans to form an alliance with them. The envoys withdrew, only to be assailed by the eager populace with a thousand questions concerning the white men, which they answered in such wise as to both satisfy and inflame the interest of their hearers.

Maxixcatzin, lord of Ocotelolco, was the first of the four lords to address his co-regents on the proposition of the Cempoallans. He observed that the Cempoallans were enemies of Montezuma and counselled the Tlascalans to receive the strangers, who seemed from their extraordinary deeds to be armed gods rather than mere men, and who now offered their potent assistance against the Mexicans. His hearers knew from the traditions handed down from their remote ancestors that there would one day arrive children of the sun, coming from the East, whose valour would be such that one of them might stand against a thousand men; it appeared to him that they were now assisting at the fulfilment of these ancient prophecies and that they should receive these powerful strangers with open arms

lest, otherwise, refusal to do so might bring disaster on the republic.[1]

At the close of Maxixcatzin's speech, Xicotencatl, lord of Titzatlan, who was the oldest of all and blind,[2] rose to reply. He took a contrary view of the expediency of admitting the so-called *teules* into their state and city; the rites of hospitality were sacred, and it was a divine precept to receive the stranger and assist him, but not when he came with evil intentions. As for the prophecies, their purport was obscure, nor were they to be lightly interpreted. If these strangers were brave, why so were the Tlascalans and it would only betray weakness to allow such a small body of men to invade their country unopposed; for if they were mere mortals, they could be destroyed, while if they were gods there would be time to placate them later on. As for his part, they seemed to him more like monsters than like gods, monsters thrown up by the sea because the sea would no longer contain them. For these, and other reasons that he exposed, the venerable Xicotencatl opposed the admission of the Spaniards into Tlascalan territory.[3]

Divided between these two opinions, the as-

[1] Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcalla;* Herrera, dec. ii., lib. vi., cap. iii.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xxvii.; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., cap. ix.

[2] Xicotencatl's age, though great, was probably not 140 years as is stated by several authorities.

[3] Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., cap. ix.; Muñoz Camargo, *Hist. de la Republica de Tlaxcallan.*

sembly of nobles seemed unable to reach a decision, when Tlehuezolotzin, lord of Tlepticpac, offered the Machiavellian proposition to welcome the commander of the *teules* by means of a friendly message sent through the Cempoallan envoys, and meanwhile to send a force of barbarous Otomies, under command of the Tlascalan commander-in-chief, General Xicotencatl, to contest their advance. If the Otomies were victorious, the credit would redound to Tlascala, while if they were defeated, the republic could disown their act.

This solution of the difficulty seems to have been received with general applause and at any rate was adopted. General Xicotencatl, son of the venerable regent of the same name, was a valiant soldier, eager for glory and he was sceptical of the divinity attributed to the Spaniards. To gain time in which to complete his arrangements for the attack, the Cempoallan messengers were detained by one pretext or another and were finally even imprisoned to prevent their premature departure.[1] Such were the reasons for the long period of delay, during which both Spaniards and Totonacs were wondering and chafing at Yxtacamaxtitlan. Cortes advanced some four leagues beyond the great wall of Tlascala, despite the entreaties of the cacique of Yxtacamaxtitlan, who again warned him against

[1] Herrera, dec. ii., lib. vi., cap. iii.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xxii.

the Tlascalans and offered to conduct him to Mexico by way of Cholula.

Accompanied by six horsemen, he rode about half a league ahead of his army, while a body of light infantry acted as scouts, supported by a vanguard of musketeers and crossbowmen. The artillery was placed in the centre, and the rear was brought up by some two thousand Indians in charge of the baggage and provisions. The first hostile encounter was with a small body of Indians, armed with the *maquahuitl* and *rodela*,[1] who attacked the Spaniards with great courage, showing no fear either of fire-arms or horses. They succeeded in unhorsing one man, who afterwards died of his wounds, and two horses were killed outright: according to Gomara, they were decapitated at a single blow. The Indians finally withdrew in good order. Four Spaniards were wounded in this

[1] The *maquahuitl* was a club about three and a half feet long in which blades of the stone called *itztli*, as sharp as razors, were fixed; *rodelas* were stout shields, usually round in shape and decorated with coloured feathers. The darts, which are so frequently mentioned, were short lances, whose points were tipped with bone or copper, or simply hardened in the fire. Clavigero identifies them with the Roman *Jaculum* or *Telum Amentatum*, and says they were the weapons most feared by the Spaniards. As marksmen, the Mexican bowmen were marvellously quick and accurate; their arrows were also pointed with bone, but, singularly enough, there is no mention throughout the conquest of poison being used on them.

engagement while the Indians had seventeen killed and an immense number of wounded.[1]

As the Spaniards advanced, they were met by two of the Cempoallan envoys accompanied by two Tlascalans who disavowed all responsibility for the recent engagements, inviting them to come to their capital and offering to pay for the horses that had been killed.[2] Whatever importance he may have attached to these excuses and protestations, Cortes feigned to accept them in good faith. The night was passed hardly enough; the only food obtainable was some little dog-like animals and *tunas,* or Mexican figs, while for dressing their wounds, the soldiers had only the grease from a fat Indian whom they had killed and cut open.[3] The next day, the first of September, the two Cempoallan envoys who had been imprisoned in the city of Tlascala appeared, having escaped during the night.[4] They related that the Tlascalans had intended to sacrifice them and they brought the news that an immense force was under arms

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. lxii. Cortes gives the number of Indians killed at fifty or sixty.

[2] *Letters of Cortes,* tom. i., p. 199.

[3] Bernal Diaz, *loc. cit.;* Gomara, cap. xlv.

[4] Herrera, dec. ii., lib. vi.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xxx. Orozco y Berra disbelieves this assertion of the envoys, saying that all those people observed with the strictest fidelity the immunities of ambassadors (*Conquista de Mexico,* tom. iv., cap. ix.). There would indeed seem to be no possible reason why the envoys should have been so roughly treated.

to attack the Spaniards. These tidings were speedily confirmed by the appearance of about one thousand Indians, who advanced with shouts and warlike gestures. Cortes ordered his interpreters to declare that his intentions were pacific and that he had not come there to fight but merely to pass through their territory, believing they were willing to allow this. The notary Godoy made a record of this transaction so that no blame should attach to the Spaniards for any blood that might be shed.

Seeing that his peaceful advances were met by increased fury, Cortes gave the order to charge, and with their usual battle-cry of "Santiago!" the Spaniards plunged into the fray. After some hours of sharp fighting, the Indians began to draw off in an orderly fashion, while the Spaniards, pressing after them, were artfully drawn into a narrow defile intersected by a watercourse, where the ground rendered the artillery and cavalry practically unavailable. The crafty Indians had decoyed them into an ambush, for all of a sudden, their astonished eyes beheld a countless multitude of warriors, amongst whom could be discerned the standard of Xicotencatl, his colours red and white surmounted by a white heron with spread wings.[1] Cortes estimated the number of the Indians at

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. lxiii.; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., cap. ix.

general Xicotencatl. Cortes extracted from the two nobles who brought this haughty answer, the information that the troops marshalling against him were those of Tlascala, although the enemy sought to dissemble this fact. Xicotencatl was the influence most hostile to the Spaniards in the Tlascalan council, and his son's troops, numbering fifty thousand, were divided into five battalions of ten thousand men each. Bernal Diaz owned that the fear of death was upon every Spaniard and that all confessed their sins, so that the friar, Bartolomé de Olmedo, and the chaplain, Juan Diaz, were occupied during the whole night in administering the sacrament of penance.[1]

The decisive engagement began on the morning of the fifth of September. The singular fact is recorded by several early historians that Xicotencatl sent three hundred turkeys and two hundred baskets of *tamalhi* or maize cakes to the Spaniards' camp, so that they might eat a good meal before fighting and not afterwards attribute their defeat to weakness from hunger.[2] Before going into the engagement Cortes made one of the simple but stirring speeches he was accustomed to address to his men, giving them

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. lxiv.

[2] Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chichimeca*, cap. lxxxiii.; Gomara, cap. xlvii.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xxxii.; Herrera, dec. ii., lib. vi., cap. vi. Cortes omits to mention this gift and Prescott discredits the story.

also some practical instructions. There must be no straggling, for their one hope lay in keeping compactly together. The foot-soldiers were told to use the points, rather than the edges of their swords, the horsemen must charge at half speed and aim their lances at the eyes of their foes, and the artillery, crossbowmen, and arquebusiers must so manage that an incessant fire should be kept up, some loading, while the others discharged the pieces.

Cortes reported that day's victory to the Emperor in terms only somewhat less laconic than Cæsar's immortal *Veni, vidi, vici.* In his second letter he wrote: "We mustered against them and our Lord was pleased to so aid us, that in about four hours we managed that they should no more molest us in our camp, though they still kept up some attacks; thus we kept fighting until it grew to be late, when they retired."

Cortes followed up his victory by two measures designed to illustrate both his wish for peace and his readiness for war. He despatched an embassy the next day to the city of Tlascala, bearing his ultimatum to the rulers of the republic. After reiterating his professions of good-will and his desire for their friendship, he declared himself ready to forget the recent hostilities; were his offer rejected, however, he would raze their capital to the ground and put every inhabitant to the sword. The envoys bore his letter offering peace, and an arrow,—the

Tlascalans might choose. While this embassy was absent, Cortes left his camp at the head of his horsemen, one hundred infantry, and some Indian allies, to destroy some neighbouring villages. In reporting the success of this sortie to the Emperor he wrote: "As we carried the banner of the Holy Cross and were fighting for our Faith and in the service of your Sacred Majesty, to your Royal good fortune, God gave us such victory that we slew many people, without ourselves sustaining any injury." The banner mentioned was made of black silk bearing the arms of Charles V., and on both sides, a red cross surrounded by white and blue rays. It bore the legend *Amici sequamur crucem et si fidem habemus in hoc signo vinceremus.*[1]

The envoys had meanwhile been courteously received by the rulers of Tlascala, a fact that confirms our suspicion that the former messengers, who pretended they had been ill-treated and destined for sacrifice, were untruthful; but, although dismay pervaded the senate and people, their indomitable courage still forbade surrender on any terms, however favourable. Maxixcatzin's advice to make peace and an alliance with the formidable *teules* was again rejected, the young general Xicotencatl declaring that the stain inflicted for the first time on the prestige of their arms could only be

[1] Elaborated from the *labarum* of Constantine.

obliterated by retrieving their defeat. Recourse was had to the priests and magicians, of whom the inquiring senators demanded whether the strangers were really gods or only men. The answer had in it perhaps more wisdom than appears at first hearing. The priests declared that the white men were not really gods but children of the sun, from whose beams they derived their strength and wisdom. They counselled therefore a night attack, as when the light of the sun was quenched, the *teules* were deprived of his assistance and were no stronger than ordinary mortals. It was contrary to the customs of the Tlascalans, and indeed of all the Indian tribes of Anáhuac, to fight at night, and it has been thought that this oracular utterance, violating what was almost a law of the nations, was suggested by Xicotencatl, who only wanted the necessary authority to attack the Spaniards in the dark, when the artillery and horses, being unseen, would spread less consternation amongst his men.

On the seventh of September a Tlascalan embassy appeared in the Spanish camp, bringing some presents and five slaves, saying: "If you are gods who eat flesh and blood, eat these Indians, and if you are beneficent deities we offer you incense and feathers; and if you are men, behold here fowls and maize and cherries." Cortes repeated his former declarations and assured them that he and his men were simple

mortals like themselves.[1] That same evening, some fifty Tlascalans came to the Spanish camp, ostensibly to bring provisions, but one of the Cempoallan chiefs called the attention of Cortes to the interest with which these men seemed to be peering about, and expressed his conviction that they were spies. One by one Cortes had them enticed apart from their companions and, by frightening and cross-questioning them, he learned about the projected night-attack and the reasons that had prompted it. He cut off the hands of the spies and sent them back to tell Xicotencatl to come whenever he chose, by day or by night, for he would always find the Spaniards ready for him.[2] Martial law everywhere deals severely with spies and the death penalty would not have exceeded their deserts, —perhaps it would have been more merciful than such barbarous mutilation.[3] Prescott observes that "it is too much to ask of any man, still less of one bred to the iron trade of war, to be in advance of the refinement of his age. We may be content if, in circumstances so unfavourable to humanity, he does not fall below it."

[1] *Relacion de Andres de Tapia,* in Garcia Icazbalceta, p. 569; Gomara, cap. xlvii.; Herrera, dec. ii., lib. vi., cap. vii.

[2] *Letters of Cortes,* tom. i., p. 202; Gomara, cap. xlviii.; *Relacion de Andres de Tapia,* p. 570.

[3] The entire garrison of Uxellodunum had their right hands amputated by Cæsar's order and, thus mutilated, were sent back to their homes.

However repugnant to our humaner feelings such punishments may be, the logic of the historian's observation compels our assent.

The night attack that followed was repulsed, as the Tlascalans, perceiving that their intended surprise was a failure, made but a poor fight and then fled away into the darkness. Several days of quiet ensued, save for some small skirmishing in the neighbourhood of the camp. Despite their repeated victories against such appalling odds, the soldiers were becoming discouraged, and discontent seethed throughout the camp; fifty-five men had perished, most of the survivors were wounded,—some of them severely,—and a dozen, of whom Cortes was one, suffered from fever. The strain on their forces of resistance was terrible, for they lived in their harness and slept,—when at all,—with their arms by their sides. Those who had come half-heartedly and against their will, the partisans of Diego Velasquez and those who were frankly afraid, despairing of success, formed the nucleus of a discontent that spread daily, influencing the others. Cortes overheard it said that if he were so mad as to rush into a situation from which he could never escape, there was no reason why the others should do likewise, and that the best thing for them to do, was to return to the coast, with or without him, as he chose. This state of unrest culminated one day, in seven men presenting themselves before their

commander to declare that, in view of the immense difficulties ahead of them, their small number, and the multitude of the enemy, they thought the expedition should return to Vera Cruz and obtain reinforcements before attempting anything further. Cortes replied in his most suave and gentle manner, calling their attention to the almost miraculous success they had so far achieved, and which he attributed to the special protection of Almighty God, for whose glory they were fighting: to retreat to the coast would be to lose all their prestige, for the move would be ascribed both by their foes and their allies to fear of Montezuma. His winning eloquence did not prove so immediately effective as usual, and despite his arguments, the grumblers still persisted, until he cut them short by exclaiming that it was better to die with honour than to live disgraced. This sentiment touched the right chord, and was loudly approved by the majority.[1]

Montezuma had followed the movements of the Spaniards with unabating interest and no small satisfaction, arguing that if they defeated the Tlascalans, they were destroying his enemies, while if the Tlascalans overcame the Spaniards then he would be rid of their obnoxious presence. When the proposals of peace were re-

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. lxix.; *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 204.

ported to him, however, he took alarm, for an alliance between Spaniards and Tlascalans was the last thing he wished to see consummated. After consultation with his advisers, he decided to send an embassy with presents to congratulate Cortes on his victories. Six nobles, accompanied by an escort of two hundred attendants, departed on this mission and, on arriving at the Spanish camp, were received with his usual urbanity by the astute commander.[1] The gift consisted of gold-dust to the value of one thousand pesos, clothing, stuffs, and feather-work. The ambassadors had been instructed to discourage the advance of the Spaniards towards Mexico, on the ground that the roads were very difficult and dangerous, and the country too sterile to furnish them provisions. They inquired what annual tribute in gold, slaves, and other products of the country the King of Spain would require of Montezuma, who professed himself ready to acknowledge the suzerainty of that monarch on condition that Cortes renounced his intention of visiting the capital. Cortes received the embassy, accepted the gifts, but made no definite answer to Montezuma's proposition. He invited the envoys to remain with him and two of them returned to Mexico to make their report, while the others continued in the Spanish camp. The same day in which

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 209; Bernal Diaz, cap. lxxii.; Gomara, cap. xlix.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xxxv.

the Mexican envoys arrived, Xicotencatl made a desperate, but vain, attack on the Spaniards; that his hereditary foes, the Mexicans, were witnesses of his defeat probably caused him greater mortification than did his losses. Resistance was at an end, and the next day an embassy from the republic solicited peace. General Xicotencatl came fully armed and escorted by fifty nobles robed in his colours, red and white. Cortes, who could not but admire the splendid courage of his intrepid opponent, received him with every mark of respect, conducting him to his own tent and seating him opposite to himself, while all the other participants in the conference remained standing. The offering brought by Xicotencatl was but a small one and, in presenting it, he said that the Tlascalans were not rich and that he made the offering merely as a token of their desire for peace. Their independence was their only possession, and it was one they had ever defended, for, despite his great power, Montezuma had never brought them under his yoke. Xicotencatl was evidently a stranger to the Mexican view of Tlascalan independence and little suspected that Montezuma would later explain to the Spaniards that the republic continued to exist merely because it was a convenient ground for the military training of the Aztec youths, while the inhabitants were a perpetual preserve, supplying victims for the Mexican altars.

To the general's efforts to excuse and explain the hostility of the Tlascalans, Cortes replied that he had come to their country trusting to the assurance of their friends, the Totonacs, that he would be welcomed, and that after they had received his messages of good-will they had treacherously attacked him and brought upon themselves the severe defeats and losses of the past days, for which he was heartily sorry. It was agreed that bygones should be forgotten, though Cortes made it plain that he only accepted the submission of the republic from an excess of condescension and magnanimity seeing that, in fact, their treachery really merited the destruction of their city and nation. The invitation to proceed at once to the city was not accepted and Xicotencatl withdrew, carrying the blue and green glass beads that Cortes sent to the regents in return for their gift.

The conclusion of a peace, which meant an alliance, perturbed the Mexican ambassadors not a little, and hardly had Xicotencatl left the camp than they sought to rouse suspicions of his sincerity, declaring that the Tlascalans were deceiving Cortes with the purpose of enticing him into some situation favourable for revenging themselves for their recent defeat. The Tlascalan opinion of the Aztecs was that they were liars and deceivers, who had subjugated their neighbours by fraud and ruled them by force; they cautioned Cortes to be chary of placing

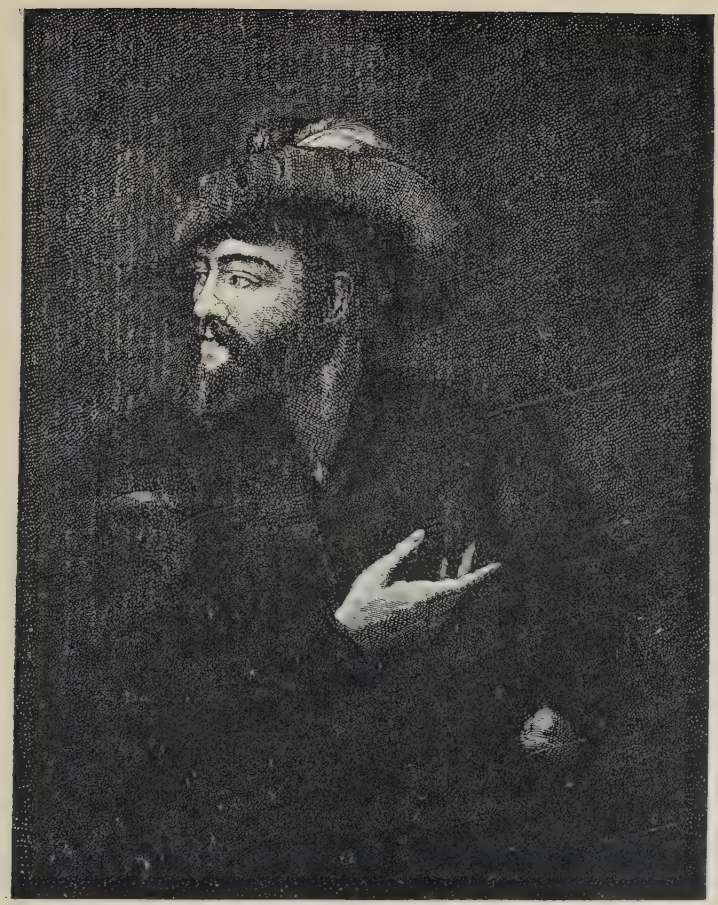
confidence in anything they said. Reporting the situation at this time in his second letter to Charles V., Cortes wrote:

I was not a little pleased to see this discord and want of conformity between the two parties, because it appeared to me to strengthen my design and that later I would find means to subjugate them. That common saying *De monte,*[1] etc., might be repeated and I was even reminded of a scriptural authority which says, *Omne regnum in seipsum divisum, desolabitur;* so I treated with the one and the other and I privately thanked both for the advice they gave me, giving to each the credit for more friendship than to the other.[2]

News of the treaty of peace was received with great rejoicing in the city, and was published throughout the republic. Tlascala was as jubilant as though victory, and not defeat, had perched on her standards. Provisions poured into the Spanish camp and the population flocked thither to see the strangers, with whom they mingled on terms of perfect confidence and amity. The continued presence of the Mexican ambassadors disquieted the Tlascalan rulers and they repeated with insistence their invita-

[1] *De monte malo si quiera un palo.* Explained in Stevens's Spanish-English dictionary: "Of an ill wood take, tho' it be but one stick, that is, Get what you can tho' never so little from an ill man or a miser."

[2] *Letters of Cortes,* tom. i., p. 210; Bernal Diaz, cap. lxxiii.



PORTRAIT OF CORTES

FROM A PICTURE IN THE MEXICO HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S GALLERY

tion to Cortes to come inside the city, where they might provide for him, and might entertain him more becomingly. Cortes, however, still delayed. He was waiting for another embassy from Montezuma that was due in six days' time and had also, meanwhile, written to Escalante at Vera Cruz, reporting his successes, and asking him to send supplies of wine and hosts for the celebration of mass.

The expected envoys arrived within the established time from Mexico, bringing three thousand dollars in gold, besides ornaments and the usual feather-work and cotton stuffs. This was intended as a God-speed to the Spaniards, whom Montezuma still urged to return whence they came, adding a warning that they should on no account trust the perfidious Tlascalans nor go into their city.

The Tlascalans, having fought so obstinately to keep Cortes out of their town, were now equally determined that he should come into it, and the humorous element in his situation was doubtless not lost on Don Fernando, who found himself so assiduously courted by the rival powers—the empire and the republic. The return of the Mexican ambassadors brought things to a climax and as soon as their arrival was known in Tlascala, the four chief rulers left the city attended by a great concourse of nobles and marched in their greatest pomp to the quarters of Cortes. After the salaams and in-

censing prescribed by their etiquette, the aged Xicotencatl spoke to Cortes in a tone of affectionate reproach, frequently repeating his name, Malintzin, Malintzin, and begging him to no longer deny them the pleasure of receiving him in their city. The venerable chieftain protested against the insidious arts of the Mexicans to poison his mind against them, and to prevent the Spaniards and the Tlascalans from becoming friends. To such an appeal there was but one reply.

The following morning, Friday the twenty-third of September, mass was first celebrated by the chaplain Juan Diaz, after which the Spaniards broke the camp at Yzompachtzinco, to which place they gave the name of Torre de la Victoria, and, marching with every precaution against a possible surprise, they made their triumphal entry into Tlascala, accompanied by a vast concourse of people collected from all the country roundabout, and amidst the acclamations of the populace. At different places during the march, military and civil dignitaries met the procession and swelled the commander's escort. The streets were thronged with people, eager to behold the *teules,* and from crowded roofs, garlands of flowers were rained down upon them. The population was in gala attire, and the four regents accompanied by nobles of each of the four states and by the priests, all in their robes of state, advanced to greet Cortes,

salaaming to the earth and sending up clouds of incense in token of their homage and submission. The palace of Xicotencatl was prepared for the Spanish commander and, as the Mexican ambassadors had come on his guarantee that they would be respected, they were lodged there with him. The Spanish troops were quartered in the extensive courts and buildings of the same palace, while the Indian allies were lodged in the dependencies of the great temple.[1]

Cortes did not relax his customary discipline because of these enthusiastic demonstrations. He gave strict orders that no one was to take anything that was not offered to him, nor was any one to move one step outside the quarters without permission. The artillery was placed and the guard mounted, exactly as though the place were besieged. The men protested and demanded more liberty; likewise the Tlascalans were hurt at what seemed to them a want of confidence in their friendship, but Cortes answered them that such were the rules and customs of his troops, which were never relaxed in war or peace. This explanation was not only sufficient to allay criticism, but so impressed General Xicotencatl that he proposed its adoption in the army under his command.[2]

[1] Ixtlilxochitl, *Historia Chichimeca*, cap. lxxxiii.; Bernal Diaz, cap. lxxiv.

[2] Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. liv., lv.; Bernal Diaz, cap. lxxv.; Sahagun, *Historia de Nueva España*, lib. xii., cap. xi.

This town [wrote Cortes in his second letter to Charles V.] is so large and admirable that, although much of what I might say I shall omit, the little which I shall say is almost incredible; for it is much larger than Granada, and very much stronger, having very good buildings, and it contains a great many more people than Granada did when it was taken, and is much better supplied with provisions, such as bread, birds, game, and river-fish and other good vegetables and edibles. There is a market in this city, in which every day above thirty thousand souls sell and buy, without counting many other small markets in different parts of the city. Everything is to be found in this market in which they trade and could need, not only provisions, but also clothing and shoes. There are jewelry shops for gold and silver and stones and other valuables of feather-work, as well arranged as can be found in any of the squares or market-places of the world; there is also as good earthenware and crockery as the best in Spain. They also sell wood and coal, and both edible and medicinal herbs. There are houses like barbers' shops, where they wash their heads and shave themselves; there are also baths: finally there prevail good order and politeness, for they are a people full of intelligence and understanding, and such that the best in Africa does not equal them. This province contains many extensive and beautiful valleys, well tilled and sown, and none are left uncultivated. The province is ninety leagues in circumference, and, as far as I have been able to judge about the form of government, it is almost like that of Venice, Genoa, or Pisa, because there

is no one supreme ruler. There are many lords, all living in this city, and the people, who are tillers of the soil, are their vassals, though each one has his lands to himself, some more than others. In undertaking wars, they all gather together and, thus assembled, they decide and plan them. It is believed that they must have some system of justice for punishing criminals, because one of the natives of this province stole some gold from a Spaniard and I told this to that Magiscatzin,[1] the greatest lord amongst them. After making their investigation they pursued him to a city which is near there, called Churutecal,[2] whence they brought him prisoner and delivered him to me, with the gold, telling me that I might chastise him. I thanked them for the diligence they took in this, but told them that, inasmuch as I was in their country, they might chastise him according to their custom, and that I did not wish to meddle with the punishment of their people while I was in their country. They thanked me for this and took him with a public crier, who proclaimed his offence, leading him through the great market-place where they put him at the foot of a sort of theatre and, with a loud voice, again published his offence. And all having seen him, they beat him on the head with sticks until they killed him. We have seen many others in the prisons, whom, it is said, were confined there for thefts and other offences they had committed. According to the visitation that I ordered to be made, this province has five hundred thousand householders, besides those of another

[1] Maxixcatzin.

[2] Meaning Cholula.

small province called Guazincango, which joins it, whose people live as these do, without a rightful sovereign, and are no less vassals of Your Highness than the Tlascalans.

The day after the solemn entry into the city, many of the chiefs and nobles assisted at mass, which was said by the chaplain, Juan Diaz. Gifts were then offered to Cortes which, though modest enough compared with the rich presents sent by Montezuma, were graciously accepted for the significance attaching to them. Three hundred young girls were next presented, amongst whom was a daughter of Xicotencatl whom he destined as a wife for Cortes, and numerous other daughters of nobles for the officers of his army. Cortes expressed his recognition of this attention, but declined to receive the young women, and in answer to the surprise of the Tlascalans, he explained that being Christians, he and his men adored and served the one true God, to whom the human sacrifices and cannibal feasts in use amongst them were offensive and that they could not consort with idolaters. An exposition of Christian doctrines then followed, which concluded by an exhortation to the Indians to abandon their superstitions and, by so doing, make it possible for the Spaniards to accept their daughters and become their firm allies.

The Tlascalans, however, were tenacious of their gods whom their forefathers had always

adored and, after consulting amongst themselves, they refused to abandon them. The most they would concede was to admit the Christian God to a place amongst their deities. Flexible on all other questions, Cortes never temporised where religion was concerned, and how far his zeal would have carried him, it is not difficult to guess, had it not been for the wiser counsels of the Mercedarian friar, Bartolomé de Olmedo, who put clearly before him the peril and folly of attempting to force conversion on people who were unprepared to receive the faith. The friar's reasoning prevailed, but a chapel was fitted up in Xicotencatl's palace and a cross was erected on the site of Cortes's reception on entering the city, and a statue of the Blessed Virgin was placed in a *teocalli* that was first cleansed and redecorated. As the Tlascalans were familiar with the cross as the sign of a god called Tonacacuahuitl, they were more pleased than not to find their new friends venerating the same symbol. Five of the noble Indian maidens were baptised and given to the Spanish officers. The daughter of Xicotencatl, who became known as Doña Luisa after her baptism, was accepted, not by Cortes, but by Pedro de Alvarado, and Prescott states that their posterity intermarried with some of the noblest families of Castile. Tlascalan authors later affirmed that Juan Diaz also baptised the four ruling lords of the republic, to whom Cortes

stood godfather; the conversion of Maxixcatzin is elsewhere described as taking place a year later (1520) when, falling ill of the smallpox and desiring to die a Christian, Cortes sent Fray Bartolomé to administer the sacrament. In the absence of any mention of such events, either by Cortes, who would have been the first to proclaim them, or by Andres de Tapia and Bernal Diaz, who were present, these alleged conversions would seem to belong to the stock of pious fables that multiplied after the conquest.

While their daughters were being baptised by the Spanish chaplain, the Tlascalans christened Cortes and Pedro de Alvarado with names that will never die, for it was from them that Cortes first acquired the name of Malintzin or Malinche, signifying Marina's captain; Muñoz Camargo, the Tlascalan historian, is authority for the assertion that after his entrance into the city the Tlascalans also addressed Cortes as Chalchuich. To Pedro de Alvarado they gave the expressive name of Tonatiuh, meaning the sun, because of his florid complexion and golden blonde hair.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHOLULAN CONSPIRACY AND MASSACRE

Events in Tlascala—The Cholulans—Their Treachery—The Massacre—Justification of Cortes—Description of Cholula—Popocatapetl

THE submission of the warlike Tlascalans contributed to enhance the fame of the Spaniards throughout the nations of Anáhuac, and envoys came from far and wide to view the formidable strangers, concerning whom, they carried back reports that excited still more the popular interest in them. During three weeks, Cortes and his men enjoyed the lavish hospitality of the city, in return for which he distributed amongst the nobles the loads of presents he had received from Montezuma and the various caciques, and which he had sent messengers to bring up from Cempoalla. These gifts consisted of the feather-work, so highly prized by the Indians, but which was of no value or interest to the Spaniards after their first curiosity was satisfied, and of the beautiful cotton-stuffs to which they were equally indifferent, but which to the Tlascalans, were the rarest of luxuries, since their country produced no cotton.

Life was not all festal, however, at least not

for Cortes, who profited by his daily companionship with the Tlascalan rulers and nobles to inform himself minutely concerning the Aztec capital, its fortifications, the number of its population and the military resources of its ruler. He heard all that his hosts were able to tell him, amongst other things, the old prophecy foretelling the arrival of the bearded white men from the East who would one day subdue and rule the land, and with whom public opinion identified the Spaniards. He answered them that he and his men did, in fact, come from the east and that their king had sent them to be their brothers; "and may it please God to grant us the grace, that by means of us, they [the Indians] may be redeemed" [1] he piously concludes.

Amongst others who, from hatred of Montezuma, offered allegiance to the Spaniards, there came another embassy from Prince Ixtlilxochitl, inviting Cortes to pass by Calpulalpan, where he would join him with all his forces and march against the Aztec capital. The envoys were sent back to their ambitious master, bearing a politic answer to his proposal.

Mexican ambassadors came and went between the capital and Tlascala. These harassed dignitaries had indeed a difficult task, for their instructions varied according as Montezuma's humour changed. Their sovereign's instruc-

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. lxx

tions to them were to turn the strangers back, but without offending them, lest, being gods, perchance their wrath might destroy the empire.

The victory over the Tlascalans had established once for all the imposing military prestige of the Spaniards, and Montezuma, despairing of staving off their impending visit, resolved to admit them to his capital with what grace he could muster. To this end an embassy was sent to Tlascala to formally invite Cortes to visit the emperor in Mexico, advising him to march by way of the city of Cholula [1] where orders for his reception had been given. The Tlascalans strongly opposed this plan, warning Cortes that Cholula would prove a trap, prepared for his destruction. They described the Cholulans as cowards in the field, but crafty and dangerous

[1] Cholula lay six leagues south of Tlascala and twenty leagues distant from the city of Mexico; it was the sacred city of Anáhuac, the Jerusalem or Mecca of the nations where stood (and stands) the greatest pyramid in Mexico, of whose construction there is no authentic record. The form of government there was theocratic, and the priests chose a captain-general to command the army while the civil affairs were administered by a council composed of six nobles.

The Cholula pyramid, now so covered with earth, and overgrown with shrubs and trees, that its artificial character and architectural lines are no longer discernible, measures at the length of its base 1423 feet, or twice the length of Cheops; the square of the base covers about twenty-four acres, and the flat area on the summit, a little more than one acre. The chief deity worshipped at Cholula was the mysterious Quetzalcoatl. See Sahagun, *Historia de Nueva España*, lib. i., cap. iii.

people, obedient in all things to Montezuma's will. The most telling argument they used, however, was their reminder that, while people had come from great distances to salute him and pay him homage, nobody had appeared from Cholula, though the city was but six leagues distant.[1]

In response to a summons Cortes sent to Cholula, there arrived an embassy, which the Tlascalans promptly pointed out was composed of persons of very inferior rank, whose very appearance in the character of ambassadors was a mockery. These people were sent back, bearing a peremptory order from Cortes to the chiefs to present themselves and make their submission without delay, otherwise he would consider and treat them as rebels against the King of Spain's authority.

Cortes acted consistently on his unfaltering conviction that he was an instrument of divine justice, and he determined that others should so regard him. He started from the dogmatic assumption that the new world belonged to Spain by right of Pope Alexander's bull of donation, that its inhabitants were, therefore, just as much the lawful subjects of the Crown as were the natives of Castile or Granada, and that to refuse obedience was rebellion. The native chiefs, in resisting his pretentions and defending their countries became, according to his reasoning,

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. ii., pp. 211–212.

instigators of revolt and must be dealt with as such. Most of all, the people were practisers of idolatry, in peril of eternal damnation, whom it was a chief part of his mission to rescue and bring into the knowledge of the Faith. He held himself to be merciful, in that he invariably invited their obedience by explaining what a privilege it was to be ruled by such a mighty sovereign as the Emperor, and he sought to accomplish their conversion by expounding the doctrines of the Christian religion. Once this choice was put plainly before them and they had refused to accept the dual blessings of vassalage and conversion, they became, in his eyes, contumacious rebels and conscious heretics. He had the Spanish sixteenth-century standards as to how all such were to be treated.

In dealing with the Cholulans, he followed the usual solemn formality of causing a letter to be drawn up by a notary; that the Cholulan priests to whom it was addressed could not understand a word of it, did not detract from the validity of the proceeding in his estimation. The excuse for their tardy appearance, offered by the Cholulan chiefs who came the next day, was, that they had not ventured to trust themselves in the power of the Tlascalans who were their enemies; they were persuaded that the latter had spoken ill of them, but they begged Cortes not to listen to such calumnies but to come to Cholula, where he might judge the

sincerity of their friendship from the welcome he would there receive.[1]

Despite the continued opposition of his new allies, Cortes decided to accept this invitation and he fixed the date of his arrival. Accompanied by a force of one hundred thousand Tlascalan warriors, he marched, on the thirteenth of October, to within two leagues of Cholula, where he pitched his camp and, to avoid possible troubles from the presence of such a number of their enemies in the Cholulan capital, he dismissed the greater part of the Tlascalans. Some five or six thousand, however, still remained with him, despite his protests that their presence was unnecessary.[2]

The following day, as many as ten or twelve thousand persons came out from the city, bearing presents of flowers, fruits, bread, and birds. The Cholulan chiefs represented to Cortes that the entrance of such a numerous body of armed Tlascalans into the city would certainly provoke disorders and, as the commander shared this apprehension, he ordered his allies to remain in the camp outside the city walls.

Upon entering the city the next day, the Spaniards were struck with the marks of a civilisation superior to that of Tlascala. The costumes of the people were richer, their manners more polished and ceremonious and, as the procession

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 213.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

moved forward amidst the assembled multitude of citizens, escorted by the principal nobles and priests bearing smoking censers, garlands of flowers were thrown down upon them from the crowded housetops. They were assigned spacious quarters in the dependencies of one of the great temples and a plentiful repast was immediately offered them. Forewarned by the Tlascalans, Cortes was not blinded by these attentions; his quick eye noted that the usual high-road was closed and another had been opened, while some of the city's streets were barricaded and on the flat roofs of the houses, stones had been collected. Some agents of Montezuma's whom he knew by sight, were also seen in conversation with the chief member of the Aztec embassy which had accompanied the Spaniards from Tlascala. This ambassador suddenly disappeared without giving any previous notice of his intention, and after his departure the polite attentions of the Cholulans seemed to diminish, while the provisions became noticeably insufficient. The visits of the chief priests and nobles became fewer and finally ceased altogether, while the Aztec envoys who still remained, changed their tone and sought once more to dissuade Cortes from going on to Mexico, saying one moment that the road was impassable, and at another that provisions were so scarce that the Emperor could not properly entertain him. The atmosphere became charged

with suspicion, some of the Cempoallan allies reported that they had discovered several pits dug in the streets, in which sharp pointed stakes were driven and carefully covered over, in such wise as to be hardly perceptible.

It was remembered the Tlascalans had warned the Spaniards, that such pitfalls were prepared for the horses. Simultaneously, eight Tlascalans who had come into the city as camp servants, reported that two men and five children had that morning been sacrificed to the god of war and that the Cholulans were sending their women and children out of the city. All doubts as to the meaning of these disquieting reports were dispelled by Marina, who had been urged by a Cholulan woman with whom she had become intimate, to leave the white men and conceal herself in her house, as a general massacre of the strangers had been ordered and her only salvation lay in adopting this plan. Marina feigned to assent, and thus acquired more particulars, all of which she faithfully reported to Geronimo de Aguilar.[1] Marina next induced her informant and two priests to visit the Spanish quarters, where they were persuaded to confirm the truth of her story. Little by little the details of the plot were disclosed. Montezuma, who had at first

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 215; Bernal Diaz, cap. lxxxiii.; Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. lix.; Herrera, dec. xi., lib. vii., cap. i.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xxxix.

directed the Cholulans to receive the Spaniards hospitably, had since been informed by certain oracles that Cholula was destined to be the grave of the strangers; he consequently revoked his previous instructions, ordered the citizens to prepare ambuscades and pitfalls in their streets and to hold themselves in readiness to take the Spaniards at a disadvantage. Twenty thousand Mexican troops, which had been stationed in a place of concealment near by, would come to their assistance at the critical moment and annihilate the obnoxious strangers.

Even the resourceful Cortes was perplexed at the dilemma in which he found himself and, before he formed a decision, he summoned his captains together and put the situation clearly before them. In such conferences the veritable character of each participant is disclosed. The timid counsel retreat, the prudent devise half measures, seeking to safeguard their honour and at the same time to save their skins. Cortes, who was as faithful to his purpose as is the needle to the pole, declared there was but one hope for them; retreat in any form would be disastrous, if not indeed impossible, and their only course was to strike quickly and strike hard, before they were struck. His plan was carefully laid and the first step was to urgently invite the principal caciques to come to his quarters, as he had a communication of importance to make to them. When they appeared, he

quietly explained that, as the presence of his men seemed no longer desired by the Cholulans, he had decided to quit the city the following day and therefore begged them to supply him with two thousand men to transport his artillery and baggage. His request was granted and the chiefs withdrew. The second step was to communicate his knowledge of the plot to the Aztec envoys, telling them that this murderous design was attributed by the Cholulans to Montezuma. The envoys protested that they were ignorant of the conspiracy and were convinced that their imperial master was equally so. Cortes was prepared for this answer which he feigned to believe, declaring that he held it to be incredible that such a great prince as Montezuma could stoop to such base treachery. His decision was taken, and he declared to the envoys that he would chastise the Cholulans in such wise as should vindicate Montezuma as well as himself. The envoys were then placed under strict guard and prevented from communicating with the Cholulans. The Tlascalan allies outside the walls were notified that they should hold themselves in readiness on the following morning, and on hearing a musket shot they should make a general assault on the city.

At dawn the next day Cortes mounted his horse and, having placed his heavy guns so as to command the approaches to the temple court or square where his men were encamped and to

which there were but three entrances, he awaited the arrival of the caciques and the promised bearers. No sooner had these latter been collected inside the enclosure, the entrances to which were guarded by soldiers, than Cortes conducted the nobles into a smaller court-yard and there questioned them one by one concerning the conspiracy, telling them that further concealment was useless as he was fully informed of their plans. The chiefs admitted their guilt, but excused their action by saying that they were bound to obey Montezuma, by whose orders the plot had been formed. Cortes feigned indignation on hearing this, declaring that they defamed the Emperor whom he held to be his friend but that in any case their plea was inadmissible, as he was in their city in response to their urgent invitation and hence protected by the laws of hospitality.

The fatal musket shot was fired. The defenceless men herded in the enclosure were massacred, while the Tlascalan allies from without rushed to attack the city, whose streets quickly became encumbered with the slain. Cortes himself states that within the space of two hours more than three thousand persons were killed, while other authorities place the number much higher.[1] This massacre is one of the bloodiest

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 216; Gomara, cap. lx.; Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chichimeca*, cap. lxxxiv.; Herrera, dec. ii., lib. vii., cap. ii.

in Mexican history and concerning it the greatest controversy has raged. Las Casas leads in judging Cortes most severely and says that it was a part of his policy, as indeed it was of the Spaniards everywhere, to strike terror into the natives by a wholesale slaughter. Bernal Diaz defends Cortes and says his course was justified later, when, in the investigation made by the friars who came for that purpose to Cholula, it was learned from the chiefs and other Cholulans that there had really been a concerted plot to destroy the Spaniards in their city.

A contrary theory is, that the Tlascalans invented the fiction of a plot expressly to provoke a massacre of their Cholulan enemies. If this be true, Marina was the only instrument for accomplishing their purpose. If Marina invented the alleged disclosures of her female friend, if she used her absolute power as interpreter to put into the mouths of the priests and caciques confessions of guilt that they never uttered, the responsibility for the massacre falls upon her.

Cortes trusted Marina. Of the sincerity of his belief in the existence of such a plot, the evidence before us leaves no room for reasonable doubt. The moment was one of great peril, in which the commander's first duty was to save his men. The accusation of Las Casas may, in this instance, be dismissed, for

it was not the policy of Cortes to massacre the Indians merely to strike terror into the survivors. Nowhere had he provoked hostilities or encouraged wanton cruelty. Admitting, however, that his belief in the existence of a conspiracy to destroy his men was honest or even correct, and granting that his only hope of salvation lay in forestalling the conspirators by striking the first blow, the excessive severity of the measures he adopted is indefensible. Nothing can excuse or attenuate the wholesale massacre of a defenceless population, and once the Spanish commander had the Mexican envoys and a certain number of Cholulan chiefs and priests securely in his power, he held sufficient hostages for his own safety. Upon these instigators of treachery, his vengeance might justly have fallen.

In a chapter devoted to his interesting and instructive reflections on this, one of the saddest and most regrettable incidents of the conquest, Prescott traces its justification back to the foundation on which the right of all or any conquest rested at the time. The research might, however, be logically carried still further back to the elemental instinct in every man to protect his life at all costs. It does not seem likely that Cortes sought warrant for his action at Cholula, in papal bulls or theological opinions. He and his men had been lured by fair words into a populous city, whose people were secretly

preparing to entrap and annihilate them, and their intention was to extricate themselves from the trap and administer such chastisement as would effectually prevent a repetition of such treachery. Once the barrier was down and the Tlascalan allies were loose in their ancient enemy's town, no effort, even had one been made, would have sufficed to check their ferocity, while the not unnatural sentiment of the resentful Spaniards was that the Cholulans merited all they suffered.

The merciless slaughter was brought to an end by the petition of some of the nobles and chief priests, who protested that they had taken no part in the plot and who humbly implored mercy for themselves and their countrymen. The Tlascalans, surfeited with blood and booty were called off and sent out of the city to celebrate their triumph in their own fashion. Two of the captive lords who were released and charged to bring back all the inhabitants who had fled, succeeded in accomplishing their difficult mission, and within twenty days the life of the city resumed its normal course.[1]

Cortes described Cholula in his second letter to Charles V. in the following terms:

> This city of Churultecal is situated in a plain and has as many as twenty thousand houses in the

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 218; Andres de Tapia, *Relacion;* Bernal Diaz, cap. lxxxiii.; Gomara, cap. lx.

body of the city, and as many more in the outskirts. It is an independent state and has its recognised boundaries, and they do not obey any chiefs but govern themselves like the Tlascaltecas. The people are better clothed in some ways than the Tlascaltecas, because their honoured citizens all wear *albornoces*[1] above their clothing, though these differ from those of Africa in having pockets, but in the making, the stuff, and the borders, they are very similar. They have all been and are, since the recent occurrence, very faithful vassals to Your Majesty, and very obedient in all that I required and commanded of them in Your Royal name; and I believe that henceforth they will remain so. This city has very fertile fields, for they possess much land, of which the greater part is irrigated; seen from the outside the city is more beautiful than the cities of Spain, because it is very flat, and contains many towers, for I certify to Your Highness that from a mosque, I counted four hundred and odd towers in the city, and all belonged to mosques.[2] It is the best adapted city for Spaniards to live in, of any I have seen since leaving the port, as it has some uncultivated lands and water-supply suitable for the purpose of raising cattle, such as no other we have thus far seen. For, such is the multitude of people who live in these parts, that there is not a palm of land which is not cultivated, and even then, there are many places where they suffer

[1] Meaning the *bournous* or mantle commonly worn by the Moors.

[2] All non-Christian places of worship except Jewish synagogues were designated mosques by the Spaniards.

for want of bread; and there are many paupers who beg amongst the rich in the streets and at the market-places, just as the poor do in Spain and other civilised countries.

Had the massacre been dictated by the policy of terrorising the natives, as Las Casas suggested, that object could not have been more fully attained. Montezuma was thrown into a panic of abject fear that still further bewildered his judgment in his dealings with the invaders. He had recourse to singular penances, and gave himself entirely into the hands of priests and magicians. He denied all knowledge of the Cholulan conspiracy, and his ambassadors continued to come and go between the capital and the Spanish camp, using every argument to divert Cortes from his determination to see their imperial master, but also making preparations for his advance which they saw was inevitable. Seeing that neither protests nor persuasion availed, three of Montezuma's agents remained permanently with the Spaniards to act as guides and purveyors for the army. The Tlascalans offered a large force of warriors, of which Cortes only accepted one thousand, while the Cempoallan chiefs were seized with fears of the Aztec monarch's vengeance and excused themselves from appearing in his capital. They were dismissed with a share of the booty and some acceptable presents for their cacique, and quit Cholula, bearing despatches for Juan de Escalante at Vera Cruz.

During the stay of the Spaniards in Cholula, the great volcano of Popocatepetl [1] was in active eruption,—a phenomenon that exercised no small influence on the superstitious natives, who deified the mountain and its neighbour Ixtaccihuatl; the crater of Popocatepetl was thought to be the abode of the tormented spirits of wicked kings. Cortes chose ten men under command of Diego de Ordaz to undertake the ascent of the volcano and make a report to him on the eruption, which continued night and day, and was accompanied by tremendous detonations and subterranean rumblings. Several Indians were found to accompany the expedition as guides for a part of the way, though beyond a certain point, no force could induce them to advance. The Spaniards mounted somewhat higher, but were obliged by the masses of snow underfoot and the shower of hot ashes that rained down on them to renounce their perilous intention of reaching the brink of the crater. They brought back snow and icicles with them to regale their comrades in the tropical heat below, and their feat contributed to still further enhance their reputation as *teules,* who knew no fear. Diego de Ordaz was, afterwards, granted a smoking volcano in his arms to commemorate this first ascension of the Popocatepetl.

[1] Popocatepetl signifying in the Mexican language "smoking mountain." Humboldt gives its height as 5400 metres. Ixtaccihuatl means the white woman.

Ordaz reported to Cortes that he and his men had obtained an extensive view of the valley of Mexico, with its lakes and cities, and had also discovered a very good road leading thither.

This exploit of Ordaz and his men has evoked the astonishment of many writers. Had these men not enough hardship and perils, but they must needs go in search of more adventures amidst the eternal ice and fire of the mysterious mountain? Divested of the somewhat fanciful trappings with which poetry and fiction have draped him, the Spanish adventurer of the sixteenth century still remains a strangely picturesque and dashing creature, whose exploits command our interest, even when his motives do not merit our applause. Many influences were necessary to produce his type. From his immediate forebears who had, after heroic struggles, freed Spain from the last vestige of Moorish domination, he inherited an ardent patriotism so closely bound up with religion that he himself, at least, was incapable of separating the two sentiments. Soldier of Spain and soldier of the Cross, for the Cross was the standard of a militant Christianity of which Spain was the truest exponent, his religion, devoutly believed in but intermittently practised, inspired his ideals, without sufficiently guiding his conduct. Ofttimes brutal, he was never vulgar, while as a lover of sheer daring and of danger for danger's sake, he has never

been eclipsed. The army of Cortes contained its fair share of the best and worst examples of this type. These men, seen in their distant perspective, seem to us to move in an aura of romance, and even the most cut-and-dried chronicle of their deeds reads more like a troubadour's tale than the sober pages of history.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE AZTEC CAPITAL

Approach to Mexico—On the Causeway—Meeting with Montezuma—Montezuma's Discourse—The Marketplace—Temple of Tlatelolco—Seizure of Montezuma —Perfidy of Cortes

ON the first day of November, the Spanish force accompanied by its Indian allies marched out of Cholula on the road to the city of Mexico. There had been some discussion about the better road to follow, for, after a certain distance from Cholula the highway divided, and, while each of the branches led to the capital, one was described as better and shorter than the other. At different places along the line of march, deputations from tribes and towns met Cortes to present gifts of gold and provisions, and to render him homage. The Tlascalans had warned him against taking the road proposed by the Aztec ambassadors, saying that it would surely lead him into some ambush, as Montezuma was determined to destroy the white men before they reached his capital. As has been said, Cortes never under any circumstances relaxed his vigilance, and this information merely resulted in more stringent orders to his men to be constantly on the alert against a possible surprise.

The first halting place was Guajocingo,[1] whose people were hostile to the Aztecs. The chiefs received the Spaniards with generous hospitality and, in conversation with the commander, warned him against Montezuma's treacherous character, repeating the assurance of the Tlascalans, that he would find one of the roads to Mexico blocked up with magueys and felled trees. They added that the obstructed road was the one he ought to take, though the Mexicans had arranged to lead him by the other one, where their warriors were waiting in concealment to attack him if the chance offered. On arriving, the next day, at the division of the roads, one of them was found, as had been described, blocked up with magueys and tree trunks. The Mexican ambassadors explained that although the open road was in fact somewhat longer, it led continuously through Mexican territory to Chalco, whereas the other traversed the country of Guajocingo, where, as the Spaniards knew, Montezuma had no jurisdiction and hence could not provide for their entertainment. Cortes decided, however, to abide by his original decision and to march by the shorter road, so he ordered the obstacles cleared away and continued mounting the lofty pass between the two volcanoes. The cold be-

[1] Also spelled Huexotzinco and Huejocingo. The spelling of Mexican names is variable amongst the early Spanish writers.

came intense, but before night came on, the army reached a commodious building of stone where the men could take shelter, and where great fires were lighted for their comfort.[1]

At this place, Cortes was met by a personage who was represented to him as the brother of Montezuma,[2] accompanied by other dignitaries and attendants, bearing rich presents and gold to the value of three thousand dollars. All the former unavailing arguments to prevent the Spaniards from advancing were again rehearsed and the formal offer of whatever sum Cortes might fix as a yearly tribute, was made; the amount would be delivered at the seacoast or wherever he might direct.

Cortes replied that did it lie with him to abandon his visit to Mexico, he would yield, with pleasure, to the wishes of Montezuma but he had been sent by his sovereign for the express purpose of visiting the Emperor in his capital that he might render a full report based

[1] *Letters of Cortes,* tom. i., p. 224; Sahagun, lib. xii., cap. xii.

[2] This embassy is somewhat differently described in the Mexican version quoted by Sahagun, Torquemada, and other early writers who collected information from native sources shortly after the conquest. These writers state that Montezuma chose a man who closely resembled him, and sent him to Cortes to represent himself as the Aztec emperor. Cortes enquired of his Cempoallan and Tlascalan allies if the man was really Montezuma, and they assured him that he was not.

on his own observations, and hence he was not at liberty to disregard these orders. The King of Spain had long since had news of the Mexican empire and its ruler, with whom he desired Cortes to establish personal relations and not through any third party, be he even Montezuma's own brother. He added the assurance that great profit and advantage would redound to the Emperor from his visit and that his apprehensions were groundless. Once he had seen and spoken with him, he would, if Montezuma so desired, immediately withdraw from the city. With this refusal, *suaviter in modo sed fortiter in re,* the embassy departed, after receiving the usual gift of beads and trinkets. Still fearful of some ambuscade or treacherous attack, Cortes warned the Mexican ambassadors that his men were prepared day and night, and that they would do well to notify all their people that any one who approached the camp after sunset would be immediately killed. Fifteen natives who prowled about, doubtless to satisfy their curiosity, were in fact killed that same night, and even Cortes himself, when making his usual rounds to inspect the guard, just escaped being fired on by a sentry, to whom he did not give the password with sufficient promptness.[1]

Resuming their march, the Spaniards arrived at Amecameca, in the province of Chalco, on

[1] *Relacion de Andres de Tapia;* Herrera, dec. ii., lib. vii., cap. iv.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xli.

the third of November. The lord of the place assigned his guests quarters in the palace and loaded them with rich presents, amongst which figured forty female slaves of great beauty and richly dressed.[1]

The province of Chalco had been recently conquered by the Mexicans, after much bloodshed, and was held in subjection by force, hence its people were not loyal subjects to be counted upon in time of need. They were the first to profit by the arrival of the Spaniards in the valley to throw off their allegiance. Cortes promised them relief and assured them that he had come to redress their wrongs and establish justice. As the Spaniards gradually, but steadily approached the capital, Montezuma fell into a state of abject despair; his gods had deserted him, his magicians and priests offered him no comfort, his lavish presents to the insatiable strangers had failed to buy them off and in the council of princes and nobles he summoned, there prevailed a hopeless diversity of opinion as to the policy to adopt towards the oncoming invaders. As a forlorn hope, the young King of Texcoco, Cacamatzin, was sent to receive Cortes, who had meanwhile advanced to Ajotzinco. The King, carried in a gorgeous litter adorned with jewels and rich plumes, was escorted by a numerous suite. Cortes, in de-

[1] Duran, *Hist. de los Indios de Nueva España,* cap. lxxiii.

scribing his meeting with the young monarch, says that "They all fell on their knees protesting so much that it only remained to say that they would defend the road by force, if I still insisted on going on."[1] The implacable conqueror continued his onward march despite these entreaties, and next halted at the beautiful little lake-town of Cuitlahuac, now called Tlahua, to which the Spaniards gave the name of Venezuela,—little Venice.

Here they first beheld the famous floating gardens called *chinampas,* on which the choicest vegetables and most beautiful flowers were cultivated. They were much impressed by the unique charm of this town, which Cortes described to Charles V. as the most beautiful they had thus far seen. The mainland had now been left behind and the Spaniards found themselves on one of the splendid causeways that gave access to the capital. The last stopping place was the stately city of Iztapalapan, seven miles distant from Mexico, of which the chief glory was its botanical and zoölogical gardens, with reservoirs full of all kinds of fish, such as no town in Europe possessed at that time. Cortes describes it as follows:

> This city of Iztapalapan has some twelve or fifteen thousand households and stands on the shore of a great salt lake, half of it [the city] in the water

[1] *Letters of Cortes,* tom. i., p. 227.

and the other half on land. Its chief has some new houses which, though still unfinished, are as good as the best in Spain; I say as large and well constructed, not only in the stone work but also in the wood work, and all arrangements for every kind of household service, all except the relief work and other rich details which are used in Spanish houses but are not found here. There are both upper and lower rooms and very refreshing gardens, with many trees and sweet scented flowers, bathing places of fresh water, well constructed and having steps leading down to the bottom. He also has a large garden round his house, in which there is a terrace with many beautiful corridors and rooms, and within the garden is a great pool of fresh water, very well constructed, with sides of handsome masonry, around which runs an open walk with well-laid tile, pavements, so broad that four persons can walk abreast on it, and four hundred paces square, making in all sixteen hundred paces. On the other side of this promenade, towards the wall of the garden, it is all surrounded by a lattice work of canes, behind which are arbours, planted with fragrant shrubs. The pool contains many fish and water fowl, such as ducks, cranes, and other kinds of aquatic birds, in such numbers that the surface is covered with them.

Four thousand *castellanos* of gold enriched the Spanish treasure-chest, besides the usual raiment of delicate cotton stuffs, feather-work, and some female slaves, but with the Aztec capital before his eyes, the magnificent hospitality

of the lord of Iztapalapan, Cuitlahuatzin, was impotent to detain Cortes in that city of delight for longer than one day. More messengers from the court had arrived to make the final arrangements for his formal entrance into Mexico the following day. Objections were raised to the admission of the Indian allies, who all belonged to tribes hostile to, or in rebellion against Montezuma, but Cortes overruled these, saying that his Indian friends did not accompany him as warriors, but to assist in carrying his baggage and artillery. Other fictitious obstacles were likewise disposed of and, on the morning of Tuesday the eighth of November, the Spanish force set out from Iztapalapan, on the last stage of the memorable march that brought the civilisation of the two worlds face to face.

The great causeway that joined the Aztec capital to the mainland was broad enough for eight horsemen to ride abreast. Three of these highways gave access to the city; that by which the Europeans first entered, forms the foundation of the present road known as Calzada de Iztapalapan, merging into the street called El Rastro.[1]

The Spanish force had originally numbered about four hundred men when Cortes set out from Vera Cruz, but, fifty at least, had fallen during the fighting in Tlascala, thus reducing

[1] Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, tom ii., p. lvii.; Alaman, *Segunda Disertacion.*

the number to not more than three hundred and fifty. Six thousand Tlascalans, a few Cempoallans, and others made up the procession that marched amidst the countless thousands of Mexicans, who lined the causeway and even covered the surface of the lake in their numberless canoes. The scene on which the Spaniards gazed was, beyond question, one of the most wonderful and beautiful ever offered to man's contemplation. The panorama of the great lakes bordered by populous towns, the walls of whose houses were covered with white lime-wash of such brilliancy that they glittered like silver in the dazzling sunlight, spread before them. The valley of Mexico to-day, despite the changes in its configuration, the destruction of its magnificent forests, and the shrinkage of its fair lakes, still offers the traveller a spectacle of surprising beauty, on which none can gaze without feelings of rapturous admiration. What it must have been when the Spaniards first beheld it, requires no great exercise of the imagination to realise. Besides the glowing and perhaps sometimes extravagant accounts of the conquerors, the testimony of soberer writers who beheld the valley immediately after the conquest has been transmitted to us, corroborating unanimously the essential facts of the more fervid descriptions. Cortes himself has told in the terse language of a soldier the events of that memorable day, and, though abler writers have

since built upon and enriched his narrative with the graces of more perfect literary style, none have composed a more impressive description of his first meeting with Montezuma:

Having gone half a league, I reached another causeway, leading into the lake a distance of two leagues to the great city of Temistitan,[1] which stands in the midst of the said lake. This causeway is two lances broad, and so well built that eight horsemen can ride abreast; and within these two leagues, there are three cities on one and the other side of the said causeway, one called Mesicalzinco, founded for the greater part within the said lake, and the other two, called Nyciaca and Huchilohuchico,[1] on the other shore of it, with many of their houses on the water. The first of these cities may have three thousand families, the second more than six thousand, and the third, four or five thousand. In all of them there are very good edifices of houses and towers, especially the residences of the lords and chief persons, and the mosques or oratories where they keep their idols. These cities have a great trade in salt, which they make from the water of the lake, and the crust of the land bathed by the lake, and which they boil in a certain manner, making loaves of salt, which they sell to the inhabitants in the neighbourhood.

[1] The Aztec name was Tenochtitlan or Mexico-Tenochtitlan. An explanation of the etymology of this name is given in the third chapter.

[1] Cortes conquered the people of Mexico but he never mastered their language. These towns were Mexicalzinco, Huitzilopocho, and Coyohuacan.

I followed the said causeway for about half a league before I came to the city proper of Temixtitan. At the junction of another causeway, which joins this one from the mainland, I found another strong fortification, with two towers surrounded by walls twelve feet high with castellated tops. This commands the two roads and has only two gates, by one of which they enter and from the other they come out. About one thousand of the principal citizens came out to meet me and speak to me, all richly dressed alike, according to their fashion; and when they came, each one in approaching me, and before speaking, would use a ceremony that is very common amongst them, putting his hand on the ground and afterwards kissing it, so that I was kept waiting almost an hour, until each had performed his ceremony. In the very outskirts of the city there is a wooden bridge, ten paces broad, across an opening in the causeway, where the water may flow in and out as it rises or falls. The bridge is also for defence, for they remove and replace the long, broad wooden beams of which it is constructed, whenever they wish; and there are many of these bridges in the city, as Your Highness will see in the account that I shall make of its affairs.

Having crossed this bridge, we were received by that lord, Montezuma, accompanied by about two hundred chiefs, all barefooted and dressed in a kind of livery, very rich, according to their custom, and some more so than others. They approached in two processions near the walls of the street, which is very broad, and straight, and beautiful, and very uniform from one end to the other, being about two

thirds of a league long and having very large houses, both dwelling-places and mosques on both sides. Montezuma came in the middle of the street, with two lords, one on the right side and the other on the left, one of whom was the same great lord, who, as I said, came in that litter to speak with me; and the other was the brother of Montezuma, lord of the city of Iztapalapan, whence I had come that day. All were dressed in the same manner, except that Montezuma was shod, and the other lords were barefooted. Each supported him below his arms and as we approached each other, I descended from my horse and was about to embrace him, but the two lords in attendance prevented me, and they and he also, made the ceremony of kissing the ground. This done, he ordered his brother who came with him, to remain with me and take me by the arm, and the other attendant walked a little ahead of us. After he had spoken to me, all the other lords who formed the two processions, also saluted me, one after another, and then returned to the procession. When I approached to speak to Montezuma, I took off a collar of pearls and glass diamonds, that I wore, and put it on his neck, and after we had gone through some of the streets, one of his servants appeared bringing two collars of shells, wrapped in a cloth, which were made of coloured shells. These they esteem very much, and from each of the collars hung eight golden shrimps a span long, and executed with great perfection. When he received them, he turned towards me and put them on my neck, and again went on through the streets, as I have already indicated, until we came to a large and handsome house, which he had prepared for our

reception. There he took me by the hand, and led me into a spacious room in front of the court where we had entered, where he made me sit on a very rich platform which had been ordered to be made for him, and, telling me to wait there, he then went away.

After a little while, when all the people of my company were distributed to their quarters, he returned with many valuables of gold and silver work, and five or six thousand pieces of rich cotton stuffs, woven and embroidered in divers ways. After he had given them to me, he sat down on another platform, which they immediately prepared near the one where I was seated, and being seated, he spoke in the following manner: "We have known since a long time, from the chronicles of our forefathers, that neither I, nor those who inhabit this country, are descendants from the aborigines of it, but from strangers, who came to it from very distant regions; and we also hold, that our race was brought to these parts by a lord, whose vassals they all were and who returned to his native country. After a long time he came back, but so much time had elapsed, that those who remained here were married with the native women of the country and had many descendants, and had built towns where they were living; when, therefore, he wished to take them away with him, they would not go, nor still less receive him as their ruler, so he departed. And we have always held that his descendants would come to subjugate this country and us, as his vassals; and according to the direction from which you say you come, which is where the sun rises, and from what you tell us of your great lord, or king, who has

sent you here, we believe and hold for certain that he is our rightful sovereign, especially as you tell us that since many days he has had news of us. Hence you may be sure that we shall obey you and hold you as the representative of this great lord of whom you speak, and that in this there will be no lack or deception; and throughout the whole country you may command at your will (I speak of what I possess in my dominions) because you will be obeyed and recognised, and all we possess is at your disposal.

"Since you are in your rightful place and in your own homes, rejoice and rest, free from all the trouble of the journey and the wars you have had, for I am well aware of all that has happened to you, between Puntunchan and here, and I know very well that the people of Cempoal and Tascaltecal have told you many evil things respecting me. Do not believe more than you see with your own eyes, especially from those who are my enemies and were my vassals, yet rebelled against me on your coming, as they say, in order to help you. I know they have told you also that I have houses with walls of gold, and that the furniture of my halls and other things of my service are also of gold, and that I am, or make myself, a god, and many other things. The houses you have seen are of lime and stone and earth." And then he held up his robes and showing me his body he said to me, "Look at me and see that I am flesh and bones the same as you and everybody, and that I am mortal and tangible." And touching his arms and body with his hands "Look how they have lied to you! It is true indeed that I have some things of gold which

have been left to me by my forefathers. All that I possess, you may have whenever you wish. I shall now go to other houses where I live; but you will be provided here with everything necessary for you and your people, and you shall suffer no annoyance, for you are in your own house and country."

I answered to all he said, certifying that which seemed to be suitable, especially confirming his belief that it was Your Majesty whom they were expecting. After this, he took his leave, and when he had gone, we were well provided with chickens, bread, fruits, and other necessaries, especially such as were required for the service of our quarters, Thus I passed six days well provided with everything necessary and visited by many of the lords.

Amazement and satisfaction must have contended for the mastery in the mind of Cortes as he listened to this singular discourse from a sovereign, of whose power he beheld such tangible proofs. Taken literally, Montezuma's speech was an acknowledgment of his own vassalage to the king of Spain, if not indeed of his abdication. Doubtless, however, Cortes did not put a strictly literal construction on the Emperor's phrases; superstition may enslave the mind without deciding the conduct of its victim, and certainly Cortes did not count on the Aztec monarch's surrender of his power, merely in obedience to the imaginary fulfilment of an ancient prophecy, and without resistance.[1]

[1] Montezuma's speech reached Cortes through Marina and Aguilar, whose best efforts did not exclude inaccuracy.

The customary vigilance was exercised in placing the guns so as to command the approaches and defend the entrances of the Spanish quarters; the guards were mounted and every precaution taken against the possibility of an attack.[1] That evening the Spaniards celebrated their entry into the capital by firing salvos of artillery, the sound and smoke of which spread terror through the city, whose inhabitants were thus furnished with actual proof that the *teules* commanded the thunder and the lightning.[2]

Accompanied by Pedro de Alvarado, Juan Velasquez de Leon, Diego de Ordaz, and Gonzalo de Sandoval, Cortes returned Montezuma's visit, in state, on Wednesday the ninth of November. His escort was composed of five soldiers, of whom Bernal Diaz was one. The latter has left us an interesting sketch of the Aztec monarch's appearance:

The great Montezuma may have been about forty years old,[3] of a good height and well proportioned, slender and not very dark-complexioned, but of the regular Indian shade. His hair was just long enough to cover his ears, and his beard was scanty and thin; his face was full and genial, with pleasing eyes. His glance was kindly and, when

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. lxxxix.; *Relacion de Andres de Tapia;* Sahagun, lib. xi., cap. xvi.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xlvi.; Gomara, *Cronica,* cap. xvi., xvii.

[2] Sahagun, lib. xii., cap. xvi.

[3] Born in 1468, Montezuma was fifty-two years old.

necessary, grave. He was exquisitely clean, and bathed once a day in the afternoon.

After the formalities exacted by the etiquette of the court had been complied with and all had taken their places in the Emperor's presence, Cortes announced the mission that had brought him to Mexico, sent by the King of Spain, the greatest monarch in the world. The usual exposition of Christian doctrine followed, accompanied by an exhortation to the Aztec sovereign to renounce the falsehoods of idolatry and embrace the Catholic faith. The homily was lengthy—perhaps more so than on previous occasions. It would be interesting to know in just what sense the great truths and mysteries of religion reached Montezuma's understanding, through the medium of Marina's interpretation. She had recited this speech a number of times, but just what her comprehension of its real meaning was, is also unknown to us. In any case it seems to have made small impression on the Emperor, who had been a priest of his own religion and was now its official chief as well as the head of the state; it was not possible for him to divest himself of his life-long beliefs in response to such stammering and mangled exposition of a new doctrine. The greatness of his power, the prosperity of his state, and all temporal blessings as well as spiritual aspirations, were centred in the national gods, and

in his answer, he dismissed the argument by admitting that the Christian God was doubtless very good, but his own deities were equally so and that they must not talk of religion. At the termination of this interview a thousand dollars of gold, besides other presents, were distributed amongst the captains, and to each soldier a golden neck-chain was given. The Spaniards returned to their quarters, talking of the delightful personality, agreeable conversation, and princely generosity of the ruler of Mexico.

The fourth day after the Christians had taken possession of the quarters assigned to them in the palace of Axayacatl, Cortes expressed a wish to visit the market-place and the temple, which his host hastened to gratify. He rode at the head of his small troop of horsemen to the Tlatelolco quarter, where the chief market of the city was situated, in the immediate neighbourhood of one of the greatest of the temples. As no better description of the great mart of Tlatelolco has ever been written than that penned by Cortes to Charles V., let us read the first impressions of the first European who ever beheld that novel spectacle.

There is one square, twice as large as that of Salamanca, all surrounded by arcades, where there are daily more than sixty thousand souls, buying and selling, and where are found all the kinds of merchandise produced in these countries, including food products, jewels of gold and silver, lead, brass,

copper, zinc, stones, bones, shells, and feathers. Stones are sold, hewn and unhewn; adobes, bricks, and wood, both in the rough and manufactured in various ways. There is a street for game, where they sell every sort of bird, such as chickens, partridges, quails, wild-ducks, fly-catchers, widgeons, turtle-doves, pigeons, reed-birds, parrots, eagles, owls, eaglets, owlets, falcons, sparrow-hawks, and kestrels, and they sell the skins of some of these birds of prey with their feathers, heads, beaks, and claws. They sell rabbits, hares, and small dogs, which latter they castrate and raise for the purpose of eating.

There is a street set apart for the sale of herbs, where can be found every sort of root and medicinal herb that grows in the country. There are houses like apothecary shops, where prepared medicines are sold, as well as liquids, ointments, and plasters. There are places like our barber shops, where they wash, and shave their heads. There are houses where they supply food and drink for payment. There are men who carry burdens, such as are called in Castile porters. There is much wood, charcoal, braziers made of earthenware, and mats of divers kinds for beds, and others very thin, used as cushions and for carpeting halls and bedrooms. There are all sorts of vegetables and especially onions, leeks, garlic, borage, nasturtium, watercresses, sorrel, thistles, and artichokes. There are many kinds of fruits, amongst others, cherries, and prunes like the Spanish ones. They sell bees' honey and wax, and honey made of corn stalks, which is as sweet and syrup-like as that of sugar, also honey of a plant called maguey, which is better than

most; from these same plants they make sugar and wine,[1] which they also sell.

They also sell skeins of different kinds of spun cotton, in all colours, so that it seems quite like one of the silk markets of Granada, although it is on a greater scale; also as many different colours for painters as can be found in Spain and of as excellent hues. They sell deerskins, with all the hair tanned on them, and of different colours; much earthenware, exceedingly good, many sorts of pots, large and small, pitchers, large tiles, an infinite variety of vases, all of very singular clay, and most of them glazed and painted. They sell maize, both in the grain and made into bread, which is very superior in its quality to that of the other islands and mainland; pies of birds and fish, also much fish, fresh, salted, cooked, and raw; eggs of hens, and geese, and other birds in great quantity, and cakes made of eggs.[2]

Finally, besides those things I have mentioned, they sell in the city markets everything else that is found in the whole country and which,—on account of the profusion and number, do not occur to my memory, nor do I describe the things, because I do not know their names. Each sort of

[1] The whitish, slippery, fermented liquor called pulque is extracted from the maguey and is still the popular drink in Mexico; as it must be drunk fresh, special pulque trains daily carry supplies to towns along the railway lines. Flavoured with pineapple, strawberry, and other fresh fruit juices, and well iced, it is a very good drink, wholesome, and only intoxicating if drunk immoderately.

[2] Given wrongly, as I think, by some translators as omelettes.

merchandise is sold in its respective street and they do not mix their kinds of merchandise of any species; thus they preserve perfect order. Everything is sold by a kind of measure, and until now, we have not seen anything sold by weight.

There is in this square a very large building, like a Court of Justice, where there are always ten or twelve persons sitting as judges, and delivering their decisions upon all cases that arise in the markets. There are other persons in the same square who go about continually among the people, observing what is sold, and the measures used in selling, and they have been seen to break some which were false.

This great city contains many mosques, or houses for idols, very beautiful edifices situated in the different precincts of it; in the principal ones of which, dwell the religious orders of their sect, for whom, besides the houses in which they keep their idols, there are very good habitations provided. All these priests dress in black and never cut or comb their hair from the time they enter the religious order until they leave it; and the sons of all the principal families, both of chiefs as well as of noble citizens, are in these religious orders and habits from the age of seven or eight years, till they are taken away for the purpose of marriage. This happens more frequently with the first-born who inherit the property, than with the others. They have no access to women, nor are any allowed to enter the religious houses; they abstain from eating certain dishes, and more so at certain times of the year than at others.

From the market-place Cortes went to the

teocalli where Montezuma, who had been carried thither in his litter, awaited him. Six men were in readiness to spare him the fatigue of the ascent by carrying him up the steps, but, refusing their proffered assistance, he and his soldiers marched up the broad staircase to the top where the Emperor received him. In reply to the courteous observation of Montezuma that he must be fatigued by the climb, Cortes answered, with a touch of bravado that was unusual to him, "Nothing ever tires me or my companions."

From the summit of the *teocalli*, towering as it did above the entire city, an extensive view of the capital and its surroundings was offered to the Spaniards, who gazed on the beauty of the scene with interest, not unmingled with apprehension roused by the sight of the system of canals and bridges, by which they might be completely cut off from retreat at Montezuma's pleasure.

The first thought of Cortes, however, was to plant a Christian church on the *teocalli*. Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo, who was present, objected and reasoned so earnestly against a step that was obviously premature and also dangerous, that the commander consented to refrain from mentioning his wish at that time. He asked permission, however, to see the interior of the sanctuaries and, after consulting with the priests Montezuma accorded his consent. The

sight that met the eyes of the Spaniards was a horrifying one. The gigantic images of Huitzilopochtli, the god of war and his companion deity Tezcatlipoca, decorated with gold and precious stones and splashed with human gore, stood within the dim sanctuary that reeked with the blood of recent sacrifice and the heavy fumes of copal incense. On a golden salver lay human hearts.

Revolted by this ghastly spectacle Cortes spoke to Montezuma through Marina saying, "My lord Montezuma, I know not how so great a sovereign and so wise a man as Your Majesty should never have perceived that these idols are no gods but the things of evil, called devils." He further asked for permission to cast out the idols, cleanse the temple, and erect there a cross and a statue of the Blessed Virgin that Montezuma had already seen. The consternation and anger provoked by this demand were very great and Montezuma answered with offended dignity, "Had I thought, Señor Malintzin, that you would offer such an insult as you have thought well to utter, I would not have shown you my gods; we hold them to be very good, for they give us health, rains, good harvests, victory, and all we desire, hence we are bound to adore them and offer them sacrifice. I beg you to dishonour them no further." Even Cortes perceived that he had gone too far and, changing his tone, he took leave of his host,

who remained behind to placate the outraged deities with fresh sacrifices.

The Spaniards, with the Emperor's consent, fitted up a chapel in one of the rooms of the palace they occupied, where mass was celebrated as long as the limited supply of wine held out. The soldiers said their prayers before the altar, with its statue of the Blessed Virgin and the symbol of the cross, and all assembled there for the Angelus.

While the altar in this improvised chapel was being erected, the carpenter discovered a masked door which, on being opened, was found to lead to a vast hall that served as a treasury. In the centre of the floor was a great pile of gold and precious stones, while the walls roundabout were hung with rich stuffs, mantles of costly feather-work, shields, arms, and numerous ornaments of gold and silver exquisitely worked. This hoard was the treasure left by Montezuma's grandfather, the Emperor Axayacatl. After inspecting the secret treasure-house, Cortes ordered the door to be sealed up and the discovery never to be mentioned.

During these first days in the capital, the Spaniards were the object of every attention and were visited daily by the great nobles of the country. Despite such outward seeming, the Spanish captains were disquieted by reports that reached them through the Tlascalan and Cempoallan allies, that treachery was brewing.

It was asserted that they had finally been allowed to enter the city because it would be more easy to annihilate them there than elsewhere. Surrounded as they were by countless hordes of Montezuma's warriors and vassals, to whom his word was law, the gravity of their situation became daily more oppressively evident to all of them. It was obvious that their stay could not be indefinitely prolonged, but it was not exactly clear how it was to terminate felicitously. If it had been difficult to get into the Aztec capital, it seemed even more of an undertaking to get out of it alive. The city was so planned that exit from it could be effectually cut off by raising the bridges; once this were done, the little handful of Christians would find themselves isolated amidst a vast multitude of fierce enemies who, if they did not overwhelm them by mere force of numbers, might reduce them by thirst and starvation. The imminence of their danger prompted Cortes to call a meeting of his captains, Juan Velasquez, Pedro de Alvarado, Gonzalo de Sandoval, and Diego de Ordaz, at which twelve soldiers [1] assisted, to consider the measures necessary for their safety. After divers propositions had been presented, Cortes exposed the plan he had been maturing in his mind, to seize Montezuma and bring him to the Spanish quarters, where he

[1] Bernal Diaz del Castillo states that he was one of the twelve.

would serve as a hostage for the good conduct of his subjects. This project, which for sheer daring stands alone in history, met with instant, if not unanimous approval, and nothing more lucidly illustrates the character of the Spanish conquerors of that epoch, than the enthusiasm with which they acclaimed the maddest undertaking ever conceived by a responsible leader.

Cortes had likewise discovered a pretext, flimsy indeed, but sufficient for his purpose, for putting his scheme into execution, by referring back to a certain report received from Juan de Escalante at Vera Cruz, while the army was still in Cholula. This report stated that Montezuma's lieutenant at Nauthla, by name Quauhpopoca, had induced Escalante to send him four Spaniards to act as his escort to Vera Cruz, where he declared he would offer his allegiance to the King of Spain, but whither he was unable to go because he would have to pass through hostile provinces, with whose people he did not wish to provoke open warfare. When the four Spaniards arrived at Nauthla, Quauhpopoca killed two of them and the other two, after barely escaping with their lives, returned to report his treachery to Escalante. A punitive force was sent, and the town of Nauthla was burned, but Quauhpopoca escaped. Escalante reported that prisoners taken at Nauthla affirmed that Quauhpopoca had declared he had received Montezuma's orders, not only for what he had

done, but also to exterminate the Spanish force left behind at Vera Cruz.[1]

So impressed were the Spaniards with the risks of their bold enterprise, that they passed the night in prayer and confessed themselves to the Mercedarian friar, as though preparing for death. On Monday, the fourteenth of November, Cortes ordered his men to prepare as though for immediate action, the gunners to be ready with the artillery and the horsemen in their saddles, after which he set out for the royal palace accompanied by five or six captains fully armed. He also placed small bodies of soldiers at different cross-streets to keep the way open behind him, while numerous others were sent, in twos and threes, to stroll casually about the streets near the palace.

Montezuma received the Spanish commander with his usual affable courtesy and, after some desultory conversation, in the course of which he gave his visitors some presents of gold and presented one of his own daughters to Cortes, the real object of the visit was disclosed. Cortes, in exposing the perfidy of Quauhpopoca, declared that he held Montezuma incapable of giving his representative such orders, but that

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 235. The version of this affair given by Bernal Diaz, Herrera, and Torquemada differs as to the cause of the trouble with Quauhpopoca. The essential fact is, that the incident served the purpose of Cortes, and we follow his account, which he said he received from Escalante.

he must answer to his king for the lives of those Spaniards and that Montezuma was bound to disculpate himself by investigating Quauhpopoca's conduct and punishing him as he deserved. The Emperor emphatically denied that Quauhpopoca had acted with his knowledge or authority and, in proof of his sincerity, he then and there despatched messengers to Nauthla, bearing his seal as a sign of their full powers, to bring the offender and his accomplices before him without delay. Such ready acquiescence in the demands of the Spaniards might seem to have blocked the way for further measures but Cortes, after waiting till the messengers had left, reopened the subject and, without useless phrases, informed the Emperor that until Quauhpopoca had been punished, His Majesty must consent to change his residence to the palace inhabited by himself where, he hastened to assure him, he would be perfectly free and would be treated with all the respect due to his rank.

Stupefied and indignant at this unheard-of proposal, Montezuma replied that such a thing was impossible, for even were he disposed to consent, his subjects would never permit it. During some four hours, the discussion continued, until Montezuma, observing the impatient mien of one of the captains and hearing his tone, though he could not understand his words, turned to Marina for an explanation.

Marina answered, begging him to accompany the Spaniards quietly and without fear, as he would be well and honourably treated, but if he resisted he would be instantly killed where he stood. After the offer of his own children as hostages had been peremptorily refused, the hapless monarch yielded to his captors and, summoning his courtiers, he ordered his litter to be prepared, explaining that in obedience to an oracle of the god of war, he would transfer his residence for a time to the palace of Axayacatl. Sadly, and with tears in their eyes, his faithful attendants bore him forth to his captivity, escorted by the Spaniards, and as the procession passed through the streets the people, although not yet comprehending its destination or the meaning of what was happening, murmured loudly at seeing their sovereign surrounded by the armed white men. The rising disturbance was checked at the outset by an order from the Emperor, commanding the populace to remain tranquil.[1]

Thus was the imprisonment of Montezuma effected. If the audacity of Cortes quickens our involuntary admiration, it need not blind us to the unspeakable perfidy of this act. Repeatedly during his march from the seacoast to the valley of Mexico, he had given his solemn

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 238; Bernal Diaz, cap. xcv.; Gomara, *Cronica*, cap. lxxxiii.; *Relacion de Andres de Tapia;* Clavigero, *Storia Antica de Mexico*, tom. ii., p. lxxi.

promise to the Emperor that his visit would be productive of nothing but what was good and advantageous to him and his people. He had represented himself, falsely, as the accredited ambassador of a great and distant king, charged to deliver messages of friendship to the Aztec monarch; he had been loaded with princely gifts and treated with royal hospitality, for all of which he protested that he would repay with "good deeds,"—*buenas obras;* if the Emperor had sought to evade his unwelcome visit and had thrown obstacles in the way of his march, it cannot be denied that he was perfectly within his rights, and both his fears which were great, and his forebodings of evil which were greater, were more than justified, as well by what he already knew of the Spaniards as by what he was later to suffer at their hands.

Orozco y Berra observes that had Cortes thus violated his faith in treating with a European, he would have been ashamed of himself, but as he was dealing with an idolater, a barbarian, an Indian, he admitted such acts of perfidy as the subtleties of genius.[1] If success achieved by imposture, deceit, and audacity is worthy of commendation, this achievement of Cortes must command our applause. Ignorant, doubtless of the letter, he guided his course by the spirit of a crafty maxim of Louis XI.: *Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare.*

[1] *Conquista de Mexico,* tom. iv., p. 316.

CHAPTER VIII

MONTEZUMA A PRISONER

Quauhpopoca—Acolhuacan—Vassalage of Montezuma—The Great Temple—The Idols Overthrown—Montezuma's Warning—The Arrival of a Fleet

ALTHOUGH a prisoner in the Spanish quarters, Montezuma was to all outward appearance free. He continued to govern, to receive his nobles and the ambassadors from distant states or his own provinces, while the pompous ceremonial of his court suffered no interruption. The unfortunate monarch persisted in maintaining the fiction that he had voluntarily changed his abode and, in reply to his counsellors and relatives who sought to arrange for his escape, he again declared that it was the will of the gods that he should remain where he was. More than a fortnight passed in this manner, when the messengers returned from Nauthla, bringing Quauhpopoca, his young son and fifteen nobles of that province, accused of favouring the murder of the two Spaniards. They were delivered to Cortes who first imprisoned them and then, after a brief interrogatory, condemned them to be burned alive. All of them had loyally defended

their sovereign and to the question whether it was by Montezuma's orders they had killed the Spaniards, they answered no. While this barbarous sentence was being carried out, Cortes ordered Montezuma to be put in irons. On the square before the palace, the populace gazed in silence at the blazing pyre of Quauhpopoca and his companions, while within Montezuma's apartment his devoted courtiers silently wept as they knelt to sustain the heavy manacles lest they should hurt his legs. When the fatal fires were spent, Cortes returned to his royal captive and removed the irons, protesting his affection and devotion towards him and offering him his liberty. Montezuma replied that it was better for him to remain where he was, for were he to return to his palace, he would be importuned by his relatives and nobles to declare open war on the Spaniards, whereas he did not wish to bring such disaster on his people.

We are here again confronted by the difficulty of measuring the conduct of Cortes by abstract standards of right and wrong. If Quauhpopoca acted in obedience to his sovereign's orders, he merited no punishment,—much less the supreme agony of death by fire. If, on the contrary, his action proceeded from his own initiative and without the previous authorisation of the Emperor, then Montezuma was free from blame and should not have been degraded by the imposition of chains. The explanation or defence

of the action of Cortes must be sought, not in the moral but in the political order. Regarded as a politic measure to advance the Spanish interests, nothing could have been wiser and more effectual than to demonstrate to the entire nation that the life of every Spaniard was sacred, and to the Emperor that there was no depth of humiliation to which he might not be brought. That Cortes felt himself vested with a dual mission of conquest and conversion, there can be no doubt; that the results of that conquest to humanity at large have been beneficial is equally positive. If there be a divine law of expiation, both in the moral and the natural order, that exacts atonement for man's offences against his creator and against his fellow-men, Montezuma was far from filling the measure of his debt by one brief hour of humiliation. Bernal Diaz, in reviewing the events of the conquest some forty years later, expressed his belief that God's providence had guided Cortes and his men in all they did, adding, "There is much food here for meditation."

The most civilised nations of modern times have stood by, while deeds of equal arrogance have been perpetrated by the strong over the weak. Examples are within our recent knowledge, and, if the royal dynasties and national independence of small states are now suppressed by intruding foreigners with less barbarity than that employed by Cortes, the reason will be

found, partly in the weaker resistance offered and partly in the humaner standards of modern warfare, to which all peoples have gradually advanced since the sixteenth century.

After Juan de Escalante was killed at Vera Cruz, Cortes had appointed Alonso del Grado to fill the post of captain there. The choice was a bad one, and it was soon found necessary to supplant him by sending Gonzalo de Sandoval to take his place. Sandoval was instructed to send up two blacksmiths from the coast, and the necessary sails, cordage, iron-work, and other materials preserved from the sunken fleet, to enable Cortes to construct two brigantines on the lake of Texcoco. He had promised to build these vessels so that Montezuma might see what the "water houses" of which he had only seen drawings, were like, but the more serious object of providing some means of communication with the mainland, in case the Mexicans should raise the drawbridges, underlay the pretext of diverting the captive Emperor.

While Montezuma adapted himself to the conditions of his captivity and even amused himself at games with his captors, the arrogance of the Spaniards increased with their growing sense of security and gave great offence to his subjects. Most of all did the King of Texcoco resent the indignities offered to his brother-sovereign and the invasive influence of the detested strangers in the affairs of the government.

Texcoco, the capital of the kingdom of Acolhuacan, stood at the north-eastern extremity of the lake of the same name. It rivalled Mexico in size and importance, was the centre of Nahua culture and has been described as the "Athens" of the Aztecs. The triple alliance of Mexico, Texcoco, and Tlacopan (Tacuba) formed the core of the Aztec empire, where centred the civilisation of Anáhuac. The kings of Texcoco and Tlacopan recognised the King of Mexico as their over-lord in war and in the affairs of the central administration, but in all other respects these sovereigns were equal, absolute, and independent in their respective dominions. Texcoco was older than Mexico, and Nezahualcoyotl, the greatest of its rulers, bore the title of Aculhua Tecutl, which Mexican historians define as the equivalent of Cæsar. This king once declared war against Mexico over a trifling question of etiquette, sacked the capital, and exacted a heavy indemnity. The kingdom was divided into seventy-five principalities or lordships, something after the feudal system in Europe during the Middle Ages. The last king before the arrival of the Spaniards, had been Nezahualpilli, a ruler of superior ability, one of the greatest princes in Mexican history, who left one hundred and forty-five children, of whom there were four sons eligible for the succession. The electors, under pressure of Montezuma, chose the eldest, Cacamatzin, with the result

that the youngest, Ixtlilxochitl, contested the election and plunged the country into civil strife from which it emerged divided, and in this weakened and distracted state, Cortes found it upon his arrival.[1]

Cacamatzin had absented himself from Mexico after the arrival of the Spaniards and refused to respond to Montezuma's invitation, sent at the instance of Cortes, to return to the city, saying that if he was wanted they knew where to find him. A conspiracy to seize him was formed with Montezuma's approval, in which his own brothers took part and, after being treacherously captured in his palace in Texcoco, he was brought to Mexico where Cortes imprisoned him, appointing his brother Cuicuitzcatzin to rule in his stead.

[1] The ambitious Ixtlilxochitl, discontented with the portion he had received, was a permanent pretender to his brother's crown and he, as has been stated, secretly sent an embassy to Cortes at Cempoalla asking his help and offering his own alliance. This afforded Cortes an early insight into the internal dissensions of the empire, by which he so readily and ably profited (Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chichimeca apud Orozco y Berra,* tom. iv.).

Texcoco rapidly diminished in population and importance after the conquest, and Thomas Gage, who visited it in 1626, found a village containing one hundred Spaniards and three hundred Indians, reduced to poverty. Great havoc had been wrought by the wanton destruction of the magnificent forests of giant cedar trees in the neighbourhood. Panfilo de Narvaez accused Cortes of using seven thousand cedar beams in the construction of his palace alone (*Voyage de Thomas Gage,* tom. i., cap. xiii.).

Deeming that the time was ripe to exact from Montezuma a formal and public recognition of his vassalage to the King of Spain, Cortes prevailed upon his prisoner to summon all the nobles of the empire to ratify his act of submission. The unhappy monarch delivered an address to the assembled nobles and invited,—nay, commanded,—them to obey Cortes for the future as the lawful representative of their real sovereign, to whom they all, as well as himself, must render obedience and tribute. This pitiful speech was delivered with such emotion of the part of the humbled speaker and provoked such an outburst of tears and lamentations that Cortes, in describing the scene to Charles V., concludes by saying, "and I assure Your Sacred Majesty that there was not one amongst the Spaniards, who heard this discourse, who did not feel great compassion."

Each of the nobles was enjoined to immediately pay his quota of tribute, and imperial messengers were sent throughout the provinces to collect it. The partition of the vast sum, variously calculated by different authorities, led to great dissension and much quarrelling amongst the Spaniards. According to the original pact made amongst themselves, one fifth of the total, after deducting the royal fifth for the King, was assigned to Cortes, but when it came to making the distribution, the greatest discontent was expressed at the commander's portion. To ap-

pease the complaints, Cortes renounced his fifth to be divided among the poorer soldiers. This remarkable man had by this time advanced beyond the stage of squabbling over the division of spoils, however rich, for his calculations already dealt with empire.

During these weeks, while the Spaniards' control was affirming itself over all branches of the government and in all the affairs of the capital, Cortes had sent different expeditions throughout the country, each accompanied by Montezuma's agents, who pointed out the whereabouts of the gold mines. These expeditions had brought back specimens of the precious metal. The search for a better harbour than that of Vera Cruz was another project that occupied the commander's attention and, with the aid of a map that Montezuma gave him and guided by the Aztecs, one was finally discovered, and Juan Velasquez de Leon was sent with fifty men to make a settlement on the banks of the Coatzacoalco River.

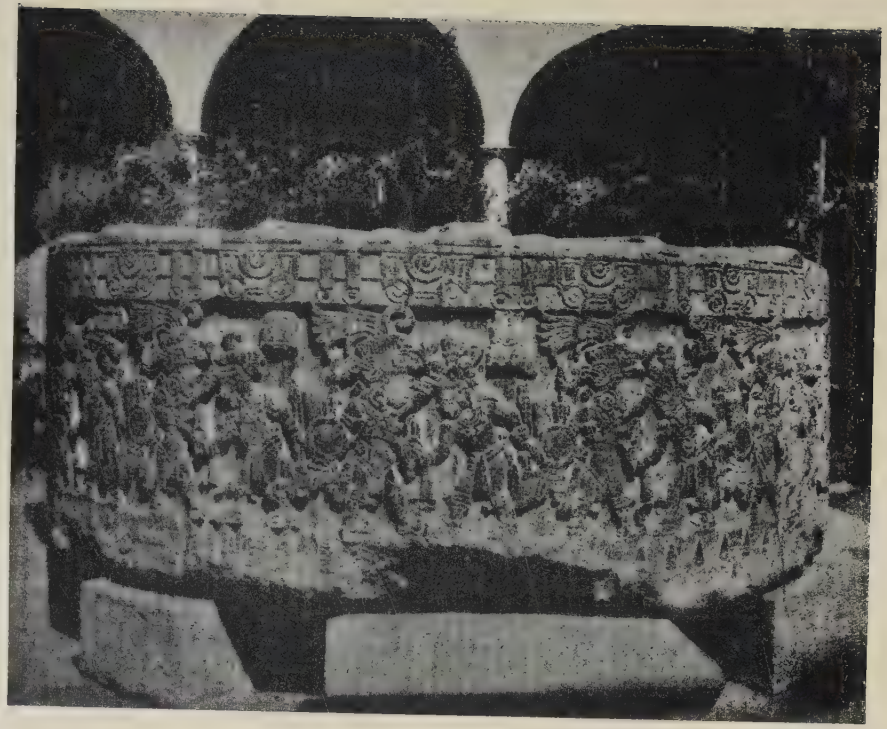
There remained, however, one national stronghold which the Spaniards had thus far not shaken,—the Mexican religion. Neither the strenuous methods of conversion employed by Cortes, nor the more apostolic system of Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo had prevailed to win Montezuma from his national gods. The ritual was daily celebrated in the temples, and human sacrifices continued to be offered on the countless

altars of Anáhuac. Since his first visit to the Tlatelolco *teocalli,* Cortes had refrained from entering the temples, doubtless distrusting his powers of self-control to restrain him from committing acts of violence which his saner judgment told him would be imprudent. The chief temple of the city stood immediately opposite the Spanish quarters, and the religious rites celebrated on the summit of the *teocalli* must have been within full sight of the garrison.

The great *teocalli* of the chief temple was completed in the form in which the Spaniards beheld it, by Montezuma's grandfather, Ahuitzotl, in 1487, when the solemn dedication was celebrated by the sacrifice of a vast number of human victims, estimated by Torquemada at 72,344,[1] by Ixtlilxochitl at 80,000,[2] but more credibly fixed by the Tellerian and Vatican Codices at the still respectable figure of 20,000. Pretexts for wars with various tribes were invented in order to procure the victims for this ghastly hecatomb, and the ceremony of incessant slaughter occupied two entire days.

The exact form and dimensions of the temple are not positively known, but it is probable that the pyramid was an oblong, measuring something over three hundred feet in length at its base, and rising in graduated terraces to a height of something less than one hundred feet.

[1] *Monarchia Indiana,* lib. ii., cap. lxiii.
[2] *Historia Chichimeca.*



SACRIFICIAL STONE

FROM BANDELIER, "ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOUR"

Bernal Diaz[1] says that he counted one hundred and fourteen steps, and this tallies almost exactly with the statement of Andres de Tapia[2] that he counted one hundred and thirteen. Bernal Diaz also measured the pyramids at Cholula and Texcoco in the same way, and counted one hundred and twenty steps on the former, and one hundred and seventeen on the latter, hence, if he was accurate, the great pyramid of Mexico was not the loftiest in the empire. Not one of the Spaniards who saw this edifice seems to have observed it critically, or to have left a complete description of it to posterity. They were all more impressed with the dreadful significance of the horrors they saw within it than with the architectural details; all agree that it was a most awesome place, in which dark, gruesome chambers, smelling like a slaughter-house, contained hideous idols, smeared with human blood. In these dim recesses, demoniacal priests, clad in black robes, with grotesquely painted faces framed in blood-clotted locks, celebrated their inhuman rites and offered smoking hearts on golden salvers to the monstrous deities there enthroned. The presiding figure of this theocratic charnel house was that of the god of war, Huitzilopochtli—the humming-bird to the left—and of his image Bernal Diaz gives a careful description.

[1] *Hist. Verdad,* cap. viii.
[2] *Relacion,* p. 582.

Its face was distorted and had terrible eyes, the body was covered with gold and jewels, and was wound about with the coils of golden serpents; in the right hand was held a bow, and in the left a bundle of arrows. Suspended from the idol's neck was a necklace of human heads and hearts made of gold and silver and studded with precious stones, and by its side stood the figure of a page, called Huitziton, bearing a lance and shield, richly jewellel. This little statue of the page was carried by the priests in battle, and was also on certain occasions borne with much pomp through the streets. The honours of these altars were shared by Tezcatlipoca,—Shining Mirror,—who was called "the soul of the world." He was a god of law and severe judgment, and was much dreaded. His statue was of black obsidian, and suspended from his plaited hair, which was confined in a golden net, was an ear made of gold, towards which tongues of smoke mounted, symbolising ascending prayers. On the summit of the *teocalli* stood a great cylindrical drum (*tlapanhuehuetl*) made of serpents' skins, which was beaten on certain solemn occasions, and as an alarum. It was said to give forth a most sinister sound which could be heard for miles, and during the siege, the Spaniards had sad cause to shudder at its fearsome roll, which so frequently announced the sacrifice of their captive comrades, whose white, naked bodies, were even discernible

in the dusky procession which moved, in the glare of torches and the sacred fires, up the terraces of the pyramid on its way to the stone of sacrifice. The area of the courtyard, some twelve hundred feet square, was paved with flat, polished stones, which were so slippery the Spaniards' horses could hardly keep their footing. Four gates in the surrounding wall, called *coatepantli,* gave entrance to the courtyard, one facing each of the cardinal points, and over each gate there was kept a store of arms in readiness for attack or defence.

Sahagun [1] enumerates seventy-eight buildings inside the wall surrounding the courtyard; they comprised chapels, cells for priests, fountains for ablutions, quarters for students and attendants, and a number of smaller *teocalli.* This tallies with the descriptions written by Cortes and Bernal Diaz, and makes it evident that the grouping of the buildings somewhat resembled that of the Kremlin at Moscow or a vast cathedral close. In one of the temples, the Spaniards, after painstaking calculation, estimated that a symmetrical pyramid of bones contained one hundred and thirty-six thousand human skulls. Amongst these temples there was one dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, circular in form and having its entrance built in imitation of a serpent's open mouth. Bernal Diaz says that this was a veri-

[1] *Hist, Nueva España,* tom. i., p. 197.

table hell or abode of demons, in which they saw frightful idols, cauldrons of water in which to prepare the flesh of the victims, which the priests ate, and furnishings like those of a butcher's stall; so that he never called the place other than "hell."

Human sacrifices and cannibalism were practised even in honour of the beneficent deity of the Toltecs, whose mild teachings, pure life, and aversion to war almost persuade us that he may have been a Christian bishop. Nothing more conclusively proves that, in spite of their material prosperity, their extended empire, and a certain refinement in their social life, the Aztecs occupied a much lower moral and intellectual level than did their Toltec predecessors in Anáhuac. From the Toltecs they had received the foundations of their civilisation; all that was good in their religion or true in their philosophy, all that was known amongst them of science, they received from that mysterious race whose only records are a few neglected and almost unknown ruins.

It was this great temple that Cortes visited some five months after his arrival in the city. The repeated discussions with Montezuma on religion had not visibly advanced his conversion, and the patience of Don Fernando was exhausted. His arrival, accompanied by ten of his men, immediately attracted a crowd of people, in addition to the priests and servants of

the temple. After glancing into the foul-smelling and blood-stained sanctuary, where he beheld in the gloomy recesses the bulky forms of bejewelled idols such as he had before seen at Tlatelolco, Cortes drew back exclaiming, "Oh, God, why dost Thou permit the devil to be so honoured in this land!"

Human life was cheap in the eyes of Cortes, and the cruelties inflicted on the natives in the furtherance of his designs show that it was not the inhumanity of the sacrifices that filled him with the most abhorrence. It was the sight of idolatry, of people given over to devil worship, that inflamed his Catholic blood, and there seems, on this occasion, to have been no friar Olmedo at hand to restrain him, as in Cholula. He first called the priests together and delivered a pious exhortation, explaining the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of mankind, and other Christian beliefs, conjuring them to abandon superstitions that imperilled their immortal souls, to purify their altars and dedicate them to the true God and the Saints. As the priests defended their own, the controversy enraged Cortes beyond control, and, seizing an instrument, he began smashing the idols right and left, with such magnificent fury that Andres de Tapia afterwards declared that he seemed like a supernatural being. Montezuma was notified and hastened to entreat him, for prudence' sake, to desist, as such profanation would

provoke an upraising of the people. Cortes, however, was deaf to remonstrance, and the idols were cast out, the temple washed and put in order, two altars being set up, one to Our Lady and the other to St. Christopher, with their respective statues placed upon them. Mass was thenceforth said there, and some of the Indians came to the ceremony, as they wanted rain and, their own gods being overthrown, they were willing to invoke the God of the Spaniards. Cortes declared they should have rain, and, with the most confident faith, ordered prayers and a procession to obtain this blessing; although the procession set forth under a cloudless sky, it returned after mass in such a downpour that the people waded ankle deep in the streets. Malintzin's religion was vindicated.[1]

Although the power of the Spaniards over the city had increased, their prestige diminished as they came to be better known. No longer *teules* in the popular imagination, they descended to the ordinary level of men,—of a different race, endowed with extraordinarily fearless courage and armed with invincible weapons,—but after all mortal men, with their fair share of the worst qualities observable in human nature. The horses were seen to be

[1] Andres de Tapia, *Relacion*, pp. 584–6; Bernal Diaz, cap. cvii.; Gomara, cap. lxxxvi.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap, liv.; Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chichimeca*, cap. lxxxvii.

animals, not even of a ferocious and blood-thirsty character, but well trained and docile and, with the fall of the legend ascribing the semi-divinity of Quetzalcoatl to the strangers, the Mexicans began to ask themselves by what right were outrages on their national gods, the captivity of their sovereign and the thinly disguised pillaging, under the name of tribute, being tolerated amongst them. The destruction of the idols had profoundly affected the Emperor, whose manner towards the Spaniards underwent a change from that time forth.

One day the monarch sent for Cortes and his captains and, on their arrival, communicated to them his grave fears for their safety if they prolonged their stay in the city. The desecration of the national temple had profoundly stirred the resentment of his subjects; the priests demanded reparation, and interpreted oracles from their gods that commanded the people to rise against the offending strangers and drive them back into the sea from whence they had come. He therefore urged his unpopular visitors to depart at once before it was too late, otherwise they would never leave the city alive.

Cortes thanked the monarch for his warning, and declared himself ready to go, but before he could do so, it was necessary to build three ships at Vera Cruz to transport his men, and for this purpose he asked for some native work-

men, carpenters and others, to assist his people to complete the ships more quickly. He informed Montezuma that when the Spaniards left he must also accompany them, in order to present himself before the King of Spain; meanwhile he must restrain the excitement amongst his subjects until the vessels were ready. Montezuma agreed to furnish the workmen, who departed in company with the two Spanish carpenters for Vera Cruz. The Spanish force had been considerably reduced in number by the departure of Velasquez de Leon with more than one hundred men to found the settlement on the Coatzacoalco River. Rodrigo Rangel with a number of others, was absent in the neighbourhood of Chinantla, where he and his men were engaged in laying out a plantation for the Spanish King, while several other smaller parties were scouring the provinces to collect tribute and search for gold mines. The occasion doubtless seemed opportune to Montezuma for the proposal he made, but these conditions likewise explain the unusually pliant attitude of Cortes and the nature of his reply It was of the first importance to reunite his scattered forces, and for this, time must be gained.

At this juncture of affairs, the complexion of everything was suddenly altered by an unexpected event at Vera Cruz. Eight days after the departure of the carpenters for the coast, the arrival of several Spanish vessels was re-

ported to Montezuma by his governors in those provinces. These reports, in the form of picture-writings, accurately represented eighteen ships, the number of people the painters had seen disembark, together with their horses, arms, and other details. Montezuma showed the pictures to Cortes, telling him that he would no longer need to build more ships, since his men would find place on those of the fleet recently arrived. The news spread through the Spanish quarters where it was received with an outburst of joyous relief; until the tension of the past few days was relaxed, no one had quite realised its severity. A salvo of artillery was fired and the men gave themselves up to festivity and rejoicing. Cortes shared the general confidence that a relief expedition had arrived and that, with such reinforcements, his conquest was now assured. When the first wave of enthusiasm had subsided, sober reflection generated doubts in the commander's mind; the fleet might after all have been sent against him by Diego Velasquez and, far from bringing assistance, it might mean his destruction. Suspense was intolerable; the only additional information that reached him in his perplexity, was a letter written by one, Alonso de Cervantes, whom he left on the coast with instructions to immediately report the arrival of any ships. This letter was brought by an Indian of Cuba, and described the arrival of but one vessel, which

the writer believed to be that of Puertocarrero and Montejo returning from Spain, adding that, as soon as the ship came into the harbour, he would ascertain and report further. Cortes despatched four of his men with instructions to bring him information as quickly as possible. Andres de Tapia was simultaneously sent to Vera Cruz, and messengers left, bearing orders to Rangel in Chinantla and to Velasquez de Leon at Coatzacoalco, instructing them to remain where they were until further notice.

CHAPTER IX

CORTES DEFEATS NARVAEZ

Arrival of the Envoys in Spain—Velasquez and the Audiencia—Landing of Narvaez—His Policy—Negotiations with Narvaez—Cortes Leaves Mexico—The Attack—After the Victory

LEAVING Cortes and his companions a prey to their conflicting hopes and fears in the Aztec capital, it is necessary, in order to explain the arrival of the fleet depicted by Montezuma's artists, to trace the development of events in Spain, affecting Cortes. As has been already stated in Chapter IV., the procurators, Puertocarrero and Montejo, who were sent from Vera Cruz with the letters and the presents to Charles V. found, on their arrival in Spain, that Diego Velasquez had, through his agent Benito Martin, already lodged a complaint against Cortes with the colonial authorities in Seville, and had succeeded in prejudicing the President of the Royal India Council, the Bishop of Burgos, against him. Their ship was in consequence seized, their own effects and the presents sent by Cortes to his father were confiscated, the present to the Emperor being forwarded in response to a royal order, dated

December the fifth from Molino del Rey, to Louis Veret, keeper of the royal jewels. The Bishop of Burgos wrote a most unfavourable report of the conduct of Cortes, representing him as a mutineer and a rebel, and advising that his agents be punished forthwith.

In this sorry plight, Puertocarrero and Montejo sought out Martin Cortes, the father of Don Fernando, and all three set out to obtain an audience of the Emperor. They were received by Charles V. in the month of March, 1520, at Tordesillas. The rich and curious objects they presented excited the interest and admiration of all who saw them, for they were the first treasures brought from the New World that in any way corresponded to the expectations of those who believed, with Columbus, that the golden realms of Cathay had been reached by sailing to the west.[1] Despite the favourable impression produced by the magnificence of their offering and the wonderful tale they had to tell of the newly discovered country, the Bishop's letter had had its effect; moreover, the Emperor was too preoccupied with his preparations to start for Germany to assume the imperial crown, to give attention to matters so remote. No definite answer was returned and, after following the court to La Coruña, where Charles embarked on the sixteenth of May, the two procurators found themselves left

[1] Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, lib. iii., cap. cxxi.

CHARLES V.—1519
FROM AN OLD PAINTING

to the tender mercies of the Bishop of Burgos. Relying on the powers conferred upon him by a royal decree dated November 13, 1518, Diego Velasquez had meanwhile decided to send an expedition to capture and bring back Cortes to Cuba. He named as commander of the expedition, Panfilo de Narvaez, a native of Valladolid who had first settled in Jamaica and afterwards taken part in the conquest of Cuba as captain of thirty bowmen, under Velasquez's command. Narvaez was at this time about forty years of age and, though his bravery was admitted by all who knew him, his arrogance, vanity, and want of discretion were notorious.

Narvaez's fleet consisted of eighteen vessels carrying nine hundred men, of whom eighty were mounted, the remainder being archers and arquebusiers. Besides the fighting men, there were about one thousand Indians, twenty heavy guns, and an ample supply of ammunition and stores.[1]

The *Audiencia* of San Domingo, foreseeing the scandal that would inevitably result from such an expedition against Cortes, sent Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon to Cuba, with full powers to stop the preparations and prohibit the sailing. Ayllon followed Diego Velasquez to the port of Trinidad where he had gone, and there learned that Narvaez was at Xagua, some fourteen leagues distant, ready to join the others of the fleet who were at Guaniguanico. He also dis-

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cix.

covered that most of the able-bodied men in the colony had enlisted and that the island would be left with few defenders in case of trouble with the natives. He went, therefore, to Xagua and notified Narvaez not to sail, but to go to Guaniguanico, where he intended to dissuade the governor from the undertaking. Though Velasquez appeared at first to yield, he ended by repudiating the authority of the *Audiencia,* though he consented to give pacific instructions to Narvaez as to his manner of dealing with Cortes. Ayllon decided at the last moment to go himself with the armada in order, if possible, to prevent troubles between the rival commanders. Narvaez, showed himself heedless of the notary's protests at San Juan de Ulua, and finally rid himself of his importunities by sending him back to Cuba on one ship, and his secretary and alguacil on another. It was some three months after his departure on his mission that Ayllon landed at San Nicolas in San Domingo, and made his way, as best he could, on foot across the island to report his ill success to the magistrates. This flouting of the *Audiencia* cost Diego Velasquez any triumph he might otherwise have hoped to gain over Cortes, and Narvaez's summary violence towards a representative of the government bears out Bernal Diaz's estimate of his character.[1]

[1] Orozco y Berra, *Conquista de Mexico,* tom. iv., cap. vi.–vii.

Narvaez's first act was to land his people, horses, and artillery, after which he proceeded to the foundation of a settlement for which he named the usual municipal authorities who, in this case, were chiefly relatives of his patron, Diego Velasquez. The news of the arrival of this new detachment of white men spread with great rapidity throughout the land, and several Spaniards, who were scattered about in the coast provinces, visited the new settlement. From these men, Narvaez procured full information concerning the movements of Cortes and the state of affairs at that moment. These Spanish informers were stragglers and deserters from the force of Cortes, and their descriptions of his achievements, dictated as they were by personal spite, were very acceptable to Narvaez. Moreover, the informants were able to serve him as interpreters and were hence made cordially welcome to his camp.

As was related in the previous chapter, Montezuma was informed of the arrival of the fleet long before Cortes, and had even entered into amicable relations with the newcomers by means of his envoys whom he sent to salute Narvaez in his name. The envoys carried the usual presents, and orders were given to the local authorities to provide generously for the wants of the new settlement. Narvaez told the envoys that Cortes was a rebel whom he had been sent to apprehend and convey to Cuba,

and that in the event of the latter not yielding to his authority, he would kill him and all of his men who resisted. He promised Montezuma his liberty and sent him some presents of Spanish merchandise. Then it was that Montezuma showed Cortes his picture-writing, depicting the arrival of the fleet. While Cortes was ignorant concerning these events, Narvaez possessed the advantage of being fully informed concerning him and his affairs. He notified Juan Velasquez de Leon at Coatzacoalco of his arrival, inviting him to join him with all his force. He had a dual claim on Velasquez's adhesion to his party, first because of the authorisation he bore from the governor of Cuba, and second because they were brothers-in-law. Velasquez was heedless of both, however, and started at once to report what was happening to Cortes. Gonzalo de Sandoval, who was in command at Vera Cruz, proved equally loyal to his commander and in reply to the address of Juan de Guevara, a priest whom Narvaez had sent with two others to summon him to submit to his authority as the legal representative of the governor of Cuba, he answered:

Sir priest, you choose your words badly, speaking of *traitors;* all of us here are better servants of His Majesty than are Diego Velasquez and this man, your captain; as you are a priest, I do not punish you as you deserve. Go in peace to Mexico where you will find Cortes, who is the captain-

general and chief justice of this New Spain, and who will answer you: there is nothing more to be said here.[1]

The priest persisted in his mission and ordered the notary to read the full powers and requirements from Diego Velasquez. As Sandoval interrupted, refusing to listen, the dispute waxed violent, ending in Sandoval seizing the three messengers, whom he bound fast and packed on the backs of Indian porters with orders to carry them straight to his commander in Mexico.

After the forcible deportation of the licentiate Ayllon to Cuba, Narvaez removed his camp from the unhealthy seacoast to Cempoalla and established his own quarters in the great temple, where Cortes had erected the Christian altar. Accustomed to ride roughshod over the timid natives of Cuba, he failed to realise that similar conduct would not succeed with the war-like Totonacs. All hopes of winning the friendship of the "fat cacique" were jeopardised by the arrogance of the commander and the wild licence of his men. A new pest was introduced amongst the Indians, by one of Narvaez's negro slaves who fell ill of smallpox, a disease hitherto unknown in America, and which spread rapidly throughout Mexico, killing and disfiguring thousands of the natives.

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cxi.; Orozco y Berra, *Conquista de Mexico*, tom. iv., cap. vii.

Such, therefore, was the situation that confronted Cortes, though at the time he was ignorant of the events we have just described. No further news came to supplement the bare facts communicated to him by Montezuma, until a fortnight after the despatch of his first messengers, for whose return he was impatiently waiting, when there arrived certain Mexicans from the coast, bringing Montezuma another picture-writing. These Indians informed Cortes that his messengers had not returned because they were forcibly detained in the camp of the newly arrived captain. This news confirmed his worst apprehensions concerning the expedition which, it clearly seemed, had come with hostile intent. He wrote a letter to its unknown commander, in which he related all that had happened since his own arrival in Mexico and asked to know from whence the fleet came, who was its captain, and with what intention it had been sent. If the newcomers were Spaniards, he offered them any assistance they might require, but if they were not subjects of the King, he admonished them to at once quit the country which he held in the King's name, otherwise he would march against them with his full force of Spaniards and Indians, as against invaders of His Majesty's realm. The municipal authorities of Vera Cruz who were with him, wrote likewise to Sandoval, and both letters were given to Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo, whose clerical character would com-

mand respect and who had already shown himself a man of singular prudence and ability in conducting negotiations.

Fray Bartolomé had been gone five days, when Guevara and his two companions, who had been carried in *hamacas,* day and night without rest from Vera Cruz, arrived at the gates of Mexico. Sandoval's letter was brought by the same carriers and Cortes was at last in possession of full information concerning the mysterious fleet. The three prisoners had been set down outside the city, while the messengers went ahead to deliver Sandoval's letter and receive instructions from Cortes. With his characteristic diplomacy, Cortes ordered the prisoners to be released; he sent them horses so that they might enter the city in a dignified manner, and on their arrival, they were received with effusion and invited to a banquet in the Spanish quarters. Cortes excused the vivacity of Sandoval and, by the exercise of those blandishments of which he was master, he succeeded in winning the newcomers over to his service. Not only did they give him all the information in their power, but they also delivered to him more than one hundred letters addressed by Diego Velasquez to the settlers at Vera Cruz, offering recompense and favour to all who would desert Cortes and threatening punishment for all who resisted Narvaez.[1]

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cxi.; *Letters of Cortes,* tom. i., p. 270.

So completely had Cortes secured the allegiance of Narvaez's three men, that he sent them back to Cempoalla bearing a letter from himself to their chief. The tone of this missive was conciliatory; he was delighted and relieved to learn that it was his old friend and neighbour in Cuba who had arrived at Vera Cruz, and reproached him for not announcing his coming. After this amiable preamble, the letter went on to point out that, if Narvaez brought any authorisation from the King to found a settlement where one had already been established in the royal name, he should present his papers to the municipality of Vera Cruz and to Cortes, by whom their provisions would be scrupulously respected; it was impossible for him to leave the city of Mexico, without risking the loss of all the treasure he had there collected for the Crown, otherwise he would come in person to welcome his old friend. Guevara and his companions departed with this letter and, hardly had they left the city when Andres de Tapia, who had accomplished the journey from Vera Cruz in the incredibly short space of three and a half days, arrived with news of fresh troubles in that settlement. The Indians, seeing the dissensions between the rival colonists, had rebelled, refusing any longer to work on the fortifications of Vera Cruz or to supply provisions for the inhabitants. Difficulties were multiplying on all sides and Sandoval had

retreated with his people to the mountains, as the only means to avoid open hostilities with Narvaez.

Cortes promptly took the hazardous decision to march forthwith to the centre of disaffection and to restore order by whatever means might prove necessary, amicably if possible, and if not, by force. Pedro de Alvarado was left in command of eighty men in Mexico to guard the Spanish quarters and the treasures; these men were made up, as far as possible, of the former partisans of Diego Velasquez or those on whom Cortes felt he could least rely, and of such others as were incapable of rapid marching. Juan Diaz remained as chaplain to the garrison.

Confused, indeed, must have been the mind of Montezuma by these perplexing events, nor did the explanations offered by Cortes throw much light on the situation. In taking leave of the captive monarch, Cortes charged him to protect and provide for the garrison left in the city, and to guard their property. He must also see that the Christian altars were respected and that fresh flowers were provided for their adornment, and the candles kept lighted day and night.[1] Montezuma offered to furnish a large force of warriors to assist in conquering the newcomers if they were enemies of his friend Malintzin, but this aid was refused, Cortes

[1] Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., cap. vii.

explaining that it was unnecessary, as he would settle the difficulty himself and speedily return. Alvarado's chief care must be to guard Montezuma and not allow him to escape. The soldiers were made to swear fidelity and obedience to the temporary commander, and were strictly enjoined to keep within their quarters and to refrain from provoking in any way the citizens of Mexico. All possible precautions having been taken and measures for all foreseeable emergencies provided, Cortes marched out of the capital by the causeway leading to Iztapalapan, at the head of eighty foot-soldiers and twelve horsemen in the early part of May, 1520.

At Cholula, this small force was increased by the men under Juan Velasquez and Rodrigo Rangel who were there awaiting its arrival, care being exercised to choose those whose fidelity was assured, while the others, together with some who were ill, were sent back to reinforce Alvarado's scanty garrison in Mexico. To still further win the loyalty of his company, Cortes distributed two loads of treasure collected by Juan Velasquez in Coatzacoalco, giving each man one or two collars of gold. An application to the republic of Tlascala for ten thousand auxiliaries was met by a refusal, the rulers of that state professing their willingness to furnish any number required to fight against Mexicans, but none at all to combat Spaniards.[1]

[1] Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., cap. vii.

Leaving Cholula, the Spanish force encountered Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo some fifteen leagues distant from the city. The friar delivered Narvaez's answer to the letter he had carried to Cempoalla. The tone of this communication was curt enough, being, in fact, hardly more than a peremptory summons to Cortes to submit without delay to the authority of Diego Velasquez. More significant even than this haughty letter, was the information the friar brought concerning the communications that had passed between Narvaez and Montezuma. At a place called Quechola, a notary, Alonso de Mata, and four Spaniards of Narvaez's company met the advancing force and, after saluting Cortes, essayed to read some legal documents calling upon him to submit himself to the lawful jurisdiction of the governor of Cuba; but as Mata was unable to produce any proof of his notarial character, all three were promptly put in the stocks and left to reflect on their temerity during the rest of the day. In the afternoon, the three men were released, treated with kindness, and presented with a number of valuable gifts. They were much impressed by the wealth of golden chains and other rich ornaments worn by even the foot-soldiers of the troops. From Ahuilizapan, the present Orizaba, where he was detained two days by heavy rains, Cortes replied to the legal notifications with which Narvaez had sought

to serve him, by sending an equally formal "requirement" to that commander, demanding his instant submission, under pain of severe penalties. This parrying with legal documents was but the skirmish, preliminary to the real engagement that seemed inevitable.

The advantage always remained with Cortes, whose gallant manners and lavish generosity contrasted most favourably with the arrogance and selfishness of Narvaez. The several bodies of messengers who approached the former to deliver their captain's fulminations, were speedily seduced, flattered, corrupted with rich presents and either openly espoused his cause, or returned to Cempoalla disaffected towards their less genial leader. Fray Bartolomé used gold with wise liberality in the enemy's camp, where he adroitly coaxed into existence a strong feeling of sympathy for Cortes, that was as much the fruit of his eloquent tongue as of his open hand. Among those whom Narvaez at this time entrusted with delivering messages and conducting negotiations was Andres de Duero, sometime secretary to Diego Velasquez and to whose influence Cortes largely owed his appointment to the command of the expedition to Mexico. The two met as old friends and, after the first cordial greeting, Duero produced a letter from his chief that was couched in more moderate language than his earlier communications. While abating nothing of his demands, it contained impor-

tant concessions. Narvaez offered to give Cortes vessels to carry himself and his companions, with all their treasure, safely out of the country, a proposition that many of the officers and men would have doubtless embraced readily enough had they ever heard of it. The bribe had no attraction for Don Fernando, who answered that he would only yield to the intruder if he could produce a royal commission, for he held the country for the King, by virtue of the authority confirmed upon him by the municipality of Vera Cruz, and he recognised no jurisdiction short of the Crown. This legal fiction seems almost laughable when we recall the circumstances of the creation of the municipal authorities of Vera Cruz, but, slender as was the foundation it offered, it was sufficient for the purpose of Cortes and on it he based his immense pretensions.

Gonzalo de Sandoval had meanwhile joined his commander, bringing a reinforcement of sixty men from the garrison at Vera Cruz, and a soldier, Tovilla by name, who had been sent to Chinantla to procure a supply of long lances for which the natives of that province were noted, had also come into camp, accompanied by two hundred Indians and bringing three hundred copper-tipped spears to be used against Narvaez's numerous cavalry.

Negotiations had failed and there only remained the appeal to arms. Cortes marched to

within one league from Cempoalla and there halted his troops to rest before fording the river. He did not dignify the operations against Narvaez with the adjective *military;* according to his view, he as chief justice of Vera Cruz was serving a writ on a disturber of the public peace who was in rebellion against the properly constituted authorities of a Spanish colony. The oncoming night promised to be both dark and stormy, and he decided to strike his enemy under these favourable conditions.

He first addressed his men, rehearsing their great services to their king and country, unique, indeed, in history, and deserving of the highest honours and rewards. The governor of Cuba, however, sought in his own petty, selfish interest to dishonour them, calling them traitors, mutineers, and pirates. He had sent his agent, Narvaez, to capture them and take them back to Cuba where the infamy of the scaffold awaited them, while the fruits of their hard-won victories would redound to the profit and glory of their executioner. This discourse went home to every man in the troop and fired the most sluggish with the determination to frustrate Narvaez. Cortes then assigned the captains their places, and outlined the plan of attack. Gonzalo de Sandoval, as alguacil mayor of Vera Cruz, was charged with the duty of arresting Narvaez. His instructions were precise, and authorised him in case of resistance, to kill the

invader, for by so doing he would serve God and the King.[1] Eighty men were told off to assist him in his hazardous undertaking. A premium of three thousand pesos was to be given to whomever first laid his hands on Narvaez, two thousand to the second, and one thousand to the third.

Cortes had received information concerning the disposition of the quarters of Narvaez, the measures for defence and other details, from one Galleguillo who had arrived that evening direct from Cempoalla, either as a deserter or sent as an informer by Andres de Duero. Crossing the swollen stream with infinite danger and difficulty owing to the swift current and the dense blackness of the night, and without falling in with the forty horsemen who were supposed to be on the alert for his coming, Cortes surprised two scouts, one of whom he captured while the other ran off towards Cempoalla to give the alarm. Pushing on in great haste to reach the town before the garrison could arm in response to the scout's alarm, these extraordinary men still found time to dismount and recite a prayer while Fray Bartolomé caused them to repeat in unison the form of general confession, after which he pronounced the absolution. The horses and the scanty baggage were left in charge of Marina and a page, while the men rushed forward to the assault of the *teocalli*

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cxxii. *Relacion de Andres de Tapia.*

where Narvaez lodged. The sentinels fled, yelling at the top of their lungs and closely followed by the oncoming assailants. Each of the captains flew to his appointed task; Pizarro and his men seized the artillery, others cut the saddle-girths of the cavalry, Sandoval got possession of several small guns placed at the base of the *teocalli,* while Cortes commanded the rear-guard and saw that those of Narvaez's men who were captured, were speedily disarmed. Sandoval, with his eighty soldiers, stormed up the steps of the *teocalli* where Narvaez and a few of his officers made a stubborn defence, in the course of which, the latter lost one of his eyes. A soldier threw a burning torch into the roof of thatch and in a moment the top of the *teocalli* was in a blaze. The struggle was quickly over; Pedro Farfan won the three thousand pesos, for he was the first to seize Narvaez, though it is nowhere recorded that he ever received the premium. Shouts of victory were heard from the *teocalli,* mingled with cheers for the King and for Cortes.

Some twelve of Narvaez's men had fallen in the short engagement and most of the survivors, including the forty horsemen who had not taken part in the fray, found little difficulty in swearing allegiance to the victor and enrolling themselves under his banner.

This victory of the twenty-ninth of May

marked an epoch in the fortunes of Cortes, working as complete a change in his situation as had the creation of the municipality of Vera Cruz and his own election by that body as captain-general and chief justice of New Spain.

He had staked everything on this venture, and again Fortune was kind to her favourite son. In receiving the officers of Narvaez, Cortes assumed an unaccustomed state, while the soldiers, ship-captains, and pilots were permitted to approach and kiss his hand. When Narvaez was brought before him, manacled, he said with bitterness, "You have much reason, Señor Cortes, to thank Fortune for having given you such an easy victory and placed me in your power." "The least important deed that I have accomplished in this country, was to capture you," replied Cortes [1] with ready sarcasm.

He had worsted Narvaez at every point, for while the latter failed either to win friends amongst the Spaniards or Indians in Mexico, or even to hold the allegiance of his own men, Cortes attached new supporters from among his opponent's followers, and had held his own men, even when his fortunes looked blackest. He carried on his negotiations with the skill of an accomplished ambassador and drafted his letters to Narvaez in language worthy of a prime minister. While engaged in this correspondence, the negative result of which he foresaw, he

[1] Oviedo, *Hist. de las Indias*, lib. xxxiii., cap. xlvii.

descended with bewildering rapidity from Mexico to the coast and, with the precision of a practised strategist, he struck his enemy one swift blow that revolutionised their positions and left him master of a new fleet, a new army, and of vast stores of munitions of war, with which to return and complete his suspended conquest.

CHAPTER X

REVOLT OF MEXICO

Ravages of Smallpox—News of the Revolt—Feast of Toxcatl—Alvarado's Folly—Cortes Returns to Mexico—Release of Cuitlahuatzin—Intervention of Montezuma—Hard Fighting—Decision to Retreat—Death of Montezuma.

THE Indians of Cempoalla were the chief sufferers from the hostilities carried on in their province; the "fat cacique" was wounded during the assault on the *teocalli,* a great part of the town was destroyed, and the people were dying in immense numbers from the virulent smallpox that raged unchecked, for want of remedies or knowledge of how to handle the dread disease. Pestilence seemed imminent, and there was a dearth of men to bring provisions into the Spanish camp, and even of women to grind the maize and make the bread. The cacique sent a painted representation of the triumph of Cortes to Montezuma, and a Spaniard was also despatched to inform Pedro de Alvarado of the victory.

With such an increase in the number of his force, Cortes felt that the conquest of the Mexican empire was assured; he sent expeditions to Panuco to contest Francisco de Garay's occu-

pation of that province, two hundred men were left under command of Diego de Ordaz to continue the interrupted work of making a settlement at Coatzacoalco, and for the support of both of these expeditions ships were sent along the coast, one of which had orders to go first to Jamaica and bring a supply of horses, pigs, sheep, and other live-stock for the colonists. Never had the present seemed more serene or the future more assured than when the last dispute over the distribution of the horses, arms, and other property of Narvaez, had been finally settled.

This promising state of affairs was suddenly dissipated by the arrival of two Tlascalans who brought the verbal information that the Mexicans had risen and were besieging Alvarado's garrison in the Spanish quarters. Closely following them, came two others with letters from Alvarado confirming the alarming report, and imploring Cortes, in God's name to hasten to his relief. The Spanish messenger whom Cortes had sent to Alvarado also returned, bringing further details of the disaster. Seven Spaniards had already been killed, many were disabled by wounds, their quarters were in flames and, as no provisions were furnished, the garrison would be starved out if not otherwise destroyed. The two brigantines built by Cortes, ostensibly to amuse Montezuma, had been burned and the plight of the Spaniards was desperate.

DON PEDRO DE ALVARADO

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Simultaneously four messengers arrived from Montezuma to complain that the Spanish captain had ordered an unprovoked attack upon the Mexicans during a religious festival, and that the latter had merely defended themselves as best they could.

The feast of Toxcatl fell upon the tenth of May, and only the highest and the noblest, adorned with their richest ornaments, but unarmed, took part in the ceremonial dance. Cortes had consented, before he left Mexico, to the usual celebration, with the proviso that there should be no human sacrifices, though very likely the priests reserved their intention to perform that part of the rites privately. The first contrariety arose from Alvarado's refusal to allow the statue of Huitzilopochtli to be restored to its former place, from which it had been ejected to make room for the Christian altars. The Tlascalans next excited his suspicions by saying that the festival was merely a pretext to collect a large multitude in the city, the real object being to fall upon the diminished garrison and exterminate it. On the day of the feast, Alvarado and others saw certain idols, decked out for the procession, standing in the court of the temple and also three youths clad in new robes, and their heads shaven, which indicated that they were destined for sacrifice. He seized the intended victims, and, by putting them to worse tortures than those of the sacrificial stone (un-

der which one of them died) he obtained such testimony as he wanted from the other two, to prove that a general revolt was planned.

What these poor creatures, who were mere lads, could be supposed to know of such conspiracies does not appear, but Alvarado was satisfied, and, arming his men, he left some in charge of Montezuma, with orders to kill the nobles who were with him, while he repaired with the others to the great *teocalli,* where six hundred nobles and priests were dancing, while some three thousand other persons assisted as spectators. The appearance of the Spaniards caused no interruption, but, at a given signal, they drew their weapons and fell upon the defenceless people, slaughtering them without quarter; the doors were guarded, but some few escaped, who gave the alarm and aroused the city. Meanwhile the nobles of the court had been slain, and the Spaniards had fortified themselves inside their quarters.

The exact place where the dance was performed is uncertain, as neither Cortes nor Bernal Diaz mentions it. Acosta, contradicting most of the early writers, argues that it must have been the court of the palace where Montezuma was kept. It nowhere appears, however, that Montezuma was present and, as the dance was a religious rite, the temple court would seem more indicated for its celebration. Alvarado, who was wounded on the head by a stone, ap-

peared before Montezuma crying: "See what your subjects have done," but the Emperor answered that had he not begun the disturbance, the Mexicans would have remained peaceable, adding, "You have undone yourself and me." Nor did Alvarado's explanations satisfy Cortes, who openly showed his anger upon his arrival.

Indeed, his conduct seems destitute of any reasonable excuse, and his efforts to exculpate himself at his trial were weak and unconvincing; at best, he had but the word of a captive, an intended victim, and that wrung from him under torture. Replying to Article IV. of the accusations against him, he alleged first, that it was common report in the city that, during the absence of Cortes, the reduced garrison would be crushed; second, on the morning of the festival he had seen a large number of sharpened sticks, with which the Mexicans openly boasted they would kill him and his men; third, the admission of the captive victim, which was confirmed by a native of Texcoco; fourth, that a skirmish had already taken place in the palace, in which he himself was wounded, and one Spaniard was killed, and that all would have certainly shared the same fate.[1]

[1] Torquemada adds the detail that huge cauldrons were prepared in which to cook the Spaniards. Las Casas advances the theory, usual with him, that Alvarado wished to strike such a blow as would terrorise the Indians.

Admitting the weighty unanimity of many authorities as pointing to the existence of the alleged conspiracy, Alvarado's conduct would still be without justification; even had there been an intention to attack him, his proper course would have been to collect all the Spaniards and the Tlascalans within his quarters; provision his garrison, hold Montezuma and the court nobles as hostages, notify Cortes by messenger, and stand strictly on the defensive until help or instructions came. The situation cannot be properly paralleled with that of Cortes in Cholula, for the conditions were entirely different. Alvarado was the most violent of all the Spanish captains and his brutality culminated in this inhuman massacre, which drove the long-suffering Mexicans to desperation. It destroyed the last illusion about the celestial origin and character of the white men, and brought on the tragedy of the "Sorrowful Night," and the siege, with its long train of misery and destruction. From that day forward, the Mexicans were deaf to all overtures from the Spaniards; regardless of suffering and indifferent to death they sought only vengeance.

Herrera admits that a revolt may have been brewing, but deprecates the wholesale massacre and the taking of jewels from the dead bodies of the victims. Clavigero scouts the idea of a conspiracy, and affirms that this was an invention to shield Alvarado. Oviedo, Sahagun, and Duran, all exempt the Indians of hostile intentions.

Cortes probably gave little credit to the story told by Montezuma's envoys, for his suspicions were already sufficiently aroused by his knowledge of the negotiations the Emperor had carried on with Narvaez behind his back. Wherever the truth lay in the contradictory explanations offered him, the important thing was to save the Spanish garrison. His decisions were quickly formed and his orders rapidly given. His prisoners, Narvaez and an officer, Salvatierra, were sent to Vera Cruz together with all the sick and disabled; swift couriers were despatched in pursuit of Ordaz and Juan Velasquez, bearing orders for them to desist from their enterprises and to join the main force at Tlascala; the great majority of Narvaez's men were induced by presents and promises to march with Cortes to Mexico and, at the head of these men and some seventy horsemen, the intrepid commander rode forth from Cempoalla on his second march to the Aztec capital. At Tlascala, the scattered forces punctually united and it was there learned that Alvarado was still holding out, though hard pressed. The total force now reached the respectable figure of thirteen hundred men. ninety-six horses, and a fair supply of artillery.[1]

[1] These figures are taken from Bernal Diaz (cap. cxxv.) whose estimate of the numbers of the force is the highest of any authority. Cortes reduced them to less than

Tlascala furnished auxiliaries to the number of three or four hundred warriors.

A rapid march brought the army to Texcoco where messengers from Montezuma and Alvarado gave the welcome news of the garrison's safety. The active assaults on the quarters, so Alvarado wrote, had ceased a fortnight ago, though the state of siege still lasted. Montezuma's letter, which was the first sign of welcome that Cortes had received since he crossed the Mexican frontier, rejected all responsibility for the disturbances in his capital, and begged Malintzin not to be angry with him. Following the road leading from Texcoco to Tepeyac (the present Guadeloupe), Cortes made his second entry into the city by the causeway leading to the Tlatelolco quarter, but under very different circumstances from those that accompanied his first visit. There were no curious or enthusiastic crowds in the streets, which, indeed, were silent and all but deserted: there was no procession of great nobles to salaam before him, neither the perfume of incense greeted his nostrils nor were garlands of flowers cast beneath his horse's feet. The few citizens whom the Spaniards met, turned their faces aside, or withdrew from their sight; several of the bridges had been raised,

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half,—70 horsemen and 500 soldiers. Prescott, following Herrera and Gomara, fixes the number at 1000 soldiers and 100 horsemen.

and over the city there brooded a sinister silence, veiling the memory of past conflict and heavy with the forecast of coming calamity. The gates of the Spanish quarters were thrown open to receive the welcome arrivals, Cortes and Alvarado embraced, while all crowded forward to kiss the commander's hand and the soldiers of both parties greeted one another and exchanged news of their several adventures. Montezuma, who advanced into the courtyard, was ignored by Cortes, who passed him by without returning his salute. Fray Bartolomé visited the offended monarch in his apartments and sought to satisfy his plaintive inquiries as to whether and why Malintzin was angry with him, by assurances that anxiety and overfatigue had rendered the general so distrait that he had been unaware of the Emperor's presence. Thus the feast of St. John the Baptist, the twenty-fourth of June, 1520, found Cortes once more within the Aztec capital, in command of a greater force than he had previously possessed, but faced likewise by an infinitely greater danger.

Despite all he was told, Cortes hardly realised the conditions prevailing in the city and the intensity of the resentment Alvarado's cruel folly had aroused, until the next morning, when he learned that no markets were open nor were any provisions supplied to the garrison. If he had counted on his mere presence sufficing to restore confidence, he awoke to his mistake.

Even his habitually imperturbable equanimity showed signs of giving way under the strain and, when some court officers approached him, asking when he would see the Emperor, he impatiently exclaimed, "Away with the dog, who wont even keep his markets open or order us to be supplied with food!" Several of his officers intervened to moderate his anger, reminding him that but for Montezuma, they would all be dead and eaten before now. Such testiness was new in Cortes and was the first sign of the corrupting effects of good fortune on his balanced and well-controlled character. The victory over Narvaez, the homage of the men, his triumph over Diego Velasquez and his certainty of conquest, seem to have somewhat puffed him up, and the sudden disappointment awaiting him in Mexico came as a painful shock to his comfortably growing sense of omnipotence. He sent a curt message, equivalent to a threat, to Montezuma that he must order the markets opened immediately. This message and the tone of its utterance probably lost nothing in transmission to the Emperor through his courtiers. His reply reminded Cortes that as he was a prisoner, he could not leave the Spanish quarters, but that if the latter desired the markets to be opened and the populace to be tranquillised, some one of the sovereigns whom the Spaniards held, must be liberated. The Kings of Texcoco and Tlacopan shared Montezuma's imprisonment

as did likewise his brother Cuitlahuatzin, lord of Iztapalapan. Cortes recognised the force of the Emperor's argument but his habitually subtle judgment was evidently disturbed, for he made the blunder of designating Cuitlahuatzin as the one to accomplish the pacification of the city.

This prince, who was an heir presumptive to the throne, was young, brave, intelligent, and popular; from the outset, he, like General Xicotencatl in Tlascala, had refused to recognise the Spaniards as *teules,* and had repeatedly advised that they be annihilated without further discussion. He had later supported the plan of Cacamatzin for a general coalition against the strangers, that was wrecked by the unpatriotic dissensions of the latter's ambitious brothers. Cortes had imprisoned the proud young prince, even putting him in chains, hence his feelings towards the Spaniards may easily be conceived.

Once free, outside the Spanish quarters that had been his prison, Cuitlahuatzin took command of the Mexican troops, organised an assault on the Spaniards and raised the whole city in revolt against the odious white men.

A Spanish horseman, Antonio del Rio, was sent out with letters for Vera Cruz, but within half an hour he returned at full gallop, wounded and crying that the bridges were up and the whole city in revolt. Close upon his heels fol-

lowed an immense crowd, brandishing weapons and uttering war-cries. From the roofs, which became peopled as though by magic, showers of missiles poured into the quarters—everywhere were shouts, confusion, and sounds of war.

Diego de Ordaz sallied out at the head of four hundred foot and a few horsemen to repulse the first onslaught. His men were immediately surrounded and unable to advance one pace, so dense was the throng that pressed upon them. Eight men were killed, a number wounded, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that their leader succeeded in getting the rest of his demoralised force safely back into the quarters. Cortes made efforts to sustain Ordaz, but was himself wounded, as well as several of his men and, seeing the impossibility of making headway against such overwhelming numbers, he fell back under shelter. Although the artillery and the arquebusiers worked fearful execution amongst the compact body of Indians, the places of the fallen were immediately filled and the death-dealing volleys seemed to produce no impression whatever, either on the numbers of the enemy or on their courage. Notwithstanding that the Mexicans had hitherto merely heard salutes fired from the guns, but had never witnessed the deadly efficiency of these engines of warfare, they stormed the very walls of the quarters, seeking

to make breaches, while others stationed on the neighbouring house-tops rained arrows, stones, and missiles of all kinds into the midst of the garrison. Fire was set to the building in various places by flaming arrows shot onto some of the wooden and thatched roofs. Scarcity of water inside the garrison, where, indeed, there was barely enough to drink, forced the Spaniards to tear down walls or to throw earth onto the flames to extinguish the spreading conflagration. On all sides the battle raged with unexampled fury,—never, not even during the war with the Tlascalans had the Spaniards sustained such an attack, and the men of Narvaez's troop, accustomed to the timid Indians of Cuba and Hayti were amazed at this unexpected baptism of fire. Night mercifully put an end to the conflict, for, as the darkness fell, the Aztecs, according to their invariable custom, drew off their forces.

The cessation of hostilities brought no rest to the beleaguered garrison, and an anxious night was passed in caring for the wounded, strengthening the defences, and repairing their weapons for the morrow. Early in the morning, Cortes ordered a general sortie, leaving a sufficient body of men to defend the quarters. He found the enemy awaiting him with seemingly increased numbers. In the course of a long day's fighting, the Spaniards lost twelve men and many disabled by wounds, without

gaining any advantage, beyond the destruction of a few houses. The artillery worked incessantly and the number of Indians killed was never known, but though a hundred fell at each discharge of the guns, a thousand seemed to spring into their places with undiminished courage.

The night following on this second day's struggle, was occupied in the construction of three wooden machines, similar to the mantelets in common use in Europe before the invention of gun-powder. They were portable towers, constructed of light beams, covered over with planks, in which were loop-holes. The towers rested on rollers and were pulled through the streets by means of ropes. All the next day (Wednesday, 27th of June) the Spaniards remained behind their defences, where they sustained almost uninterrupted attacks, that left them no time for much-needed rest. Cuitlahuatzin was everywhere present amongst the besiegers, encouraging his people and directing their operations with singular skill.

In the midst of the ever-increasing perils that beset his men, Cortes appealed to Montezuma to use his authority to stop the fighting. If he still had illusions as to Montezuma's influence over his people, that unhappy prince evidently had none. To Fray Bartolomé and Cristobal de Olid, who came to him on behalf of the commander, he frankly said that the people

would no longer listen to or obey him, for they had chosen another leader; he added his conviction that not a Spaniard would leave the city alive. Yielding finally to the persuasions of his two visitors, the Emperor vested himself for the last time in his imperial robes and, accompanied by his courtiers bearing the insignia of his rank, he mounted the parapet of the palace overlooking the square. The unexpected apparition of their sovereign threw an instant hush over the raging crowd of Mexicans who dropped their arms and, falling prostrate, they touched the earth with their foreheads. Amidst the profound silence that reigned Montezuma spoke, declaring that he was not a prisoner, but lived with the white men voluntarily, free to come and go at his pleasure; he exhorted his people to cease fighting and assured them that the *teules* only asked to be allowed to leave the city in peace. It is not to be wondered at, that this badly inspired and feebly spoken discourse failed to procure the cessation of hostilities.

On the contrary, he had hardly finished speaking when the young prince, Quauhtemotzin, who was one of the leaders of the people, stepped forward and reviled him as a coward and the effeminate tool of the Spaniards, declaring that his subjects renounced obedience to one who had so degraded his royal dignity. With that he hurled a stone, and in the volley of missiles

that followed, one struck the Emperor on the head.[1]

The Spaniards who had been charged to protect Montezuma's person with their shields were not quick enough, and it is said that he was also wounded by arrows in the arm and in the leg. The wounds were not, however, serious, but the unfortunate monarch was evidently determined not to survive this supreme humiliation and, refusing to allow his hurts to be properly dressed, he remained without food in a profoundly dejected condition. Herrera describes Cortes as showing the greatest concern, solicitously visiting the Emperor to comfort him, but it seems little likely that, in the midst of his many perilous occupations, the commander found time to condole with his wounded captive; for Montezuma's tardy efforts for peace had failed completely, and though Prescott says that the Aztecs "shocked at their own sacrilegious act . . . dispersed, panic-struck, in different directions . . . so that not one of the multitudinous array remained in the great square," there seems to be no authority for believing that any such dramatic revulsion of feeling took place. Montezuma had fallen from his royalty and his high priesthood to be a thing of scorn and loathing to his people, while

[1] *Codex Ramirez* in Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., cap. x.; Acosta, *Hist. Nat. y Moral de las Indias*, lib. vii., cap. xxvi.

his influence on the course of events was less than *nil.*

The attacks on the walls of the Spanish quarters continued all day, interrupted once by a conference between Cortes and a group of Mexican nobles, who assured him that the only condition on which they would consider peace was that he and his men should leave the city and quit the country; failing this, they had determined to fight to the end even if everybody perished in the conflict.[1]

On Thursday, June 28th, the wooden towers or turtles (*tortugas*), as the soldiers called them, were drawn out and started through the street leading to the causeway of Tacuba. This road out of the city was the most easily accessible and the shortest, and had hence been chosen in preference to either the Iztapalapan or the Tepeajac causeway. The turtles proved less effective than had been hoped; they were ponderous and clumsy to move and, though they protected the men inside them and enabled them to reach some of the lower housetops, they gradually sustained such damage that they no longer offered an effective shelter.

The *teocalli* of the great temple, overshadowing as it did the courtyards of the quarters, was a vantage ground of which the Aztecs profited

[1] *Letters of Cortes,* tom. i., p. 288.

to do great damage to the garrison. The Christian altar had been destroyed and the cross supplanted by the statues of the national gods, Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca, which were once more restored to their original pedestals. Several hundred nobles and priests had taken permanent possession of the summit of the *teocalli,* where they were protected from the fire of the garrison by the sanctuaries, behind or into which they retreated at their pleasure.

The first attack on this important stronghold was led by Escobar in command of one hundred men, but was unsuccessful. Cortes, who had been badly wounded in his left hand, had his shield bound to his arm and, selecting three hundred Spaniards and several thousand Tlascalans, he charged the mass of Indians defending the foot of the great staircase. The horsemen were of little service, as the pavement of the temple courtyard was so slippery their steeds could hardly keep their feet. The *teocalli* was composed of five terraces, communicating with one another by flights of steps built at the corners, one over the other, so that when the first terrace was reached, it was necessary to make the circuit of the pyramid in order to mount the second flight. The whole structure measured about three hundred feet square at its base, so the distance the Spaniards had to cover before reaching the top was scarcely less than a mile. Supported by Alvarado, Sandoval,

and Ordaz and closely followed by his men, Cortes attempted the ascent of the first staircase, leaving the Tlascalans and a small force of Spaniards to defend the base and hold off an attack at his rear. Every foot of the ascent was stubbornly contested by the Aztecs on the upper terraces, from which they hurled down great stones and masses of burning wood on the assailants. Every terrace was hotly disputed, and the arquebusiers posted below rendered splendid service, forcing many of the Mexicans to retreat from their exposed position on the top platform and take refuge in the sanctuary. The area of the summit was paved with flat stones and its expanse was unbroken, save by the great stone of sacrifice and two small, tower-like structures about forty feet in height, in which stood the idols.

Retreat was impossible, and the chivalry of two worlds locked in a death struggle on the lofty platform between earth and heaven. In the furious fight that raged between the combatants, neither of whom gave or asked for quarter, many were hurled over the sides of the pyramid and fell, crushed and mangled, on the lower terraces, or were despatched by the defenders at the base. It is related by several writers that an attempt was made by two Mexicans to drag Cortes to the edge and force him over, but that, by his superior dexterity, he

saved himself.[1] During three mortal hours eight hundred men swayed to and fro, from side to side of the perilous stage, dedicated so appropriately to the god of war, under the shadow of whose dread presence these rites of his fearful cult were being celebrated. Victory finally rested on the superior arms of the Spaniards, but not an Aztec warrior was left alive to grace their triumph. Every man of the defenders, about five hundred, had given his life in defence of his gods. Forty-five Spaniards had fallen and of the survivors, all were more or less severely wounded.

No victory on any other site in the city could have caused more rejoicing to the Spaniards or greater dismay amongst the Mexicans than this dearly-bought success in the very stronghold of the Aztec theocracy. To complete their triumph, the soldiers overturned the monstrous idols, rolling them down the steps of the pyramid and, after collecting what treasures there were in the sanctuaries, they set fire to them. Great was the lamentation amongst the Mexicans, for those who had perished were of their best and bravest; the bodies were collected and reverently carried away for burial. Not grief alone afflicted the natives, but the fall of their great temple and the destruction of their protecting idols renewed the old-time forebodings that the

[1] Herrera, dec. ii., lib. x., cap. ix.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. lxix.; Prescott, tom. ii., lib. v., cap. ii.

coming of the *teules* presaged the end of their empire. That night the Spaniards burned several hundred houses in the city.

While the influence of this disaster was still fresh on the minds of the people, Cortes invited their leaders to a conference, with a view to coming to terms. In his address to them, which was delivered through Marina, he rehearsed the events of the preceding days, reminding them of their losses and sufferings and declaring that these calamities were the consequences of their own stubbornness, for he was their friend and was much afflicted at being forced to do them such injury. He pointed out that their resistance was hopeless and that if they persisted, they would force him to exterminate them. The answer of the chiefs was prompt and definite; they recognised the truth of some things he had said but they had made their calculations that if, for every Spaniard who fell, a thousand of their men perished, they could still hold out and conquer. With forceful logic they reminded Cortes that, while his forces were daily weakening from death, wounds, illness, and fatigue, their own numbers were increasing by fresh arrivals hourly. His provisions would give out, the bridges were raised and there was no hope of escape for the Spaniards. The truth of this reasoning was irrefutable, for, as Cortes afterwards wrote to Charles V., "they were perfectly right, for though we had no

other enemy save starvation and the want of provisions, this would suffice to kill us in a short time." [1]

Friday, the twenty-ninth of June, showed the situation unchanged. The Spaniards managed to capture one of the ditches on the Tacuba causeway, where the Mexicans had destroyed the bridges, which they then filled in with adobes, pieces of wood and earth to establish a crossing for their horses. On Saturday, a review of their situation showed that, despite their efforts and their victories, they had not really bettered their situation: their number was daily reduced by death, while the severely wounded, destitute of proper attention and cure, encumbered the quarters where provisions had become so scanty that each white man received for his ration, a handful of maize, and each Tlascalan a *tortilla*.[2] Another enemy now confronted Cortes, which was the grumbling, swelling daily to the very borders of rebellion, inside his quarters. The Narvaez contingent had suffered some bitter disappointments and painful surprises. This march to Mexico under the triumphant standard of Cortes, had not proved the profitable excursion on which they had confidently set out. The stories told them of a magnificent capital, of which he was master,

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom i., p. 291.

[2] Flat cakes made of maize and water similar in form to a buckweat cake.

and where a captive sovereign daily distributed dazzling wealth to even the humblest foot-soldiers, were found to bear no resemblance to the facts with which they were confronted. Of treasure, they had seen none, and they were besieged by an hostile army in a capital that seemed destined to be the tomb of all of them. They audibly cursed Cortes who had led them into this situation. In the midst of these perplexities,—war without and insurrection within his own quarters,—Cortes decided that he must at all costs fight his way out of the city. There was in his troop a soldier called Blas Botello, who enjoyed some reputation as an astrologer, or even as a magician amongst the more ignorant. Cortes was not exempt from the influence of ideas common enough, even amongst learned people in that century. Some of Botello's minor predictions had been observed to come true and when consulted concerning the plan for leaving the capital, he answered that they must leave in the night.

It was easier to perceive the wisdom of evacuating the city, than it was to devise means for accomplishing the undertaking. First of all it was necessary to gain possession of the ditches on the Tacuba road and to fill them in where the bridges had been destroyed. There were seven of these, and during two days the Mexicans defended them stoutly and were only overcome after exhausting combats, in one of

which Cortes was even reported to have fallen. Another matter to be decided was the fate of the royal and noble captives. The simplest solution of this problem was the one Cortes adopted. He ordered them to be strangled in their chains. Was Montezuma included in the number of victims? Contradictory answers are given to this query by different authorities; like the virtue of Mary Stuart and the death of Louis XVII., it occupies a place within the sphere of the eternally debatable.

Montezuma Xocoyotzin, ninth king of Mexico, died on June 30, 1520, in the fifty second year of his age, the eighteenth of his reign, and in the seventh month of his captivity. His death was attributed by the Spaniards to the wound caused by the stone which struck him on the head; by the Mexicans it was, on the contrary, asserted that he was put to death by Cortes. The *Codex Ramirez,* before quoted from the work of Orozco y Berra, states that Montezuma was found stabbed to death by the Spaniards with the other chiefs who shared his captivity. Acosta accepts this as true, and Father Duran (cap. lxxvi.) says, "They found him dead with chains upon his feet, and five dagger wounds in his breast, and with him, many other of the chiefs and lords who were prisoners." Amongst the murdered nobles were the kings of Tlacopan and Texcoco and the lord of Tlatelolco. Cacamatzin, according to Ixtlilxochitl, was stabbed

forty-five times, and he adds that Montezuma died from the wound in his head, "although his vassals say that the Spaniards themselves killed him, and plunged a sword into his fundament." [1]

The murder of the other chiefs was deemed necessary, as it was neither possible to be burdened with them in the flight from the city, nor was it wise to release them. Their bodies were thrown out of the Spanish quarters at a spot called Teayotl, because of a stone turtle that stood there, in the hope that their fate might discourage the people and also give them occupation in preparing their funerals as required by custom.[2] The account of the wounding and death of Montezuma given by Cortes, was naturally followed by Gomara; Oviedo also copies his words, and says that he heard the same account *viva voce* from Pedro de Alvarado; Herrera asserts that the Emperor's wound was not mortal,[3] but that he died because he refused all attendance and food; and Bernal Diaz, who relates the same story, adds the affecting detail that "Cortes and all the captains and soldiers wept as though they had lost a father," [4] which those may believe who can. Clavigero refers

[1] Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chichimeca,* cap. lxxxviii.

[2] Sahagun, lib. xii., cap. xxviii.; Ixtlixochitl, *Hist. Chichimeca,* cap. lxxxviii.

[3] Lib. x., cap. x.

[4] *Hist. Verdad.,* cap. cxxviii.

to the grief of the Spaniards, as described by Bernal Diaz, and says that in view of the contradictory accounts, it seems impossible to know the truth adding, "I cannot believe that the Spaniards would take the life of a king to whom they owed so many benefits and from whose death they would derive only evil." [1]

The facts exclude participation in this charitable incredulity; Montezuma's influence was gone; another leader had been chosen by the nation in the person of the brave Quauhtemotzin, and when Cortes announced his death, offering to deliver his body for burial the people cried out, "We want Montezuma neither living nor dead." [2] Hence the fallen sovereign's presence was only an embarrassment to Cortes, who was planning to fight his way out of the city with as few encumbrances as possible,—even the precious gold was being left behind. The moment the Emperor became an obstacle, his doom was sealed, and there was nothing in the character or conduct of Cortes which warrants the belief that he was influenced by sentiments of compassion for the King he had degraded, while his disposal of Cacamatzin at that time, and of Quauhtemotzin later in Yucatan, reveal the absence of any scruples whatsoever. Prescott joins Clavigero in his generous assumption and, with a fine outburst of indignation, finds it "hardly

[1] *Storia Antica del Messico*, tom. ii., p. 103.
[2] Herrera, lib. x., cap. x.

necessary to comment on the absurdity of this monstrous imputation." Such sentiments do credit to the magnanimity of these writers for it is manifestly the nobler part to admit such a charge against Cortes, only when forced by irrefutable proofs, which in this case are not forthcoming. Orozco y Berra, the result of whose extensive researches are expressed in calm judicial language in his *Conquista de Mexico,* adopts the Indian version. Clavigero has perhaps said the most that generous impartiality will allow, when he states that, " There reigns such variety among historians that it seems impossible to verify the truth."

Torquemada [1] records that Montezuma's body was taken to Copalco where it was cremated, according to the Aztec usage, though the solemnity was marred by the insults heaped by some of the bystanders upon the hapless corpse. Herrera was of the opinion that the body was buried at Chapultepec, because the Spaniards heard great lamentations in that quarter, and because that was the place of royal sepulture, but the observation of Clavigero on this opinion that there was no fixed place for burying the sovereigns and that Chapultepec, being some three miles distant from the Spanish quarters, it was hardly likely the sound of lamentation could have been heard there, seems to weaken this assumption.

[1] Lib. iv., cap. lxx.

Diego Muñoz Camargo, the Tlascalan historian, would seem to be the chief authority for the pious legend that Montezuma was baptised by his own desire just before he died, and that Cortes and Pedro de Alvarado were his godfathers. Gomara asserts that the Emperor had expressed his wish to become a Christian prior to the departure of Cortes from Mexico to meet Narvaez, but that the ceremony was deferred until Easter, so that it might be celebrated with more solemnity, and was afterwards forgotten amidst the confusion of the changed circumstances. The silence of Cortes on a matter he would have been eager to report in his letters, seems alone sufficient to dispose of the assertion, and Torquemada, who would also have not been slow to enroll a royal convert, does not admit the story.[1]

A pathetic figure is that of this Aztec king, gifted with some of the highest qualities of his race, venerated during a long and prosperous reign almost as a demi-god, only to be humbled in the end to the very dust. The starting point of his downfall was his superstition, for, had he listened to his generals rather than to his priests, Cortes and his handful of adventurers would never have left the seacoast alive. The misfortunes and humiliations of the last months of his life seemed to completely change his

[1] *Monarchia Indiana,* lib. iv., cap. lxx.; José Ramirez, *Bautismo de Motecuhzoma II., Noveno Rey de Mexico.*

character, so that, from the time of his docile abdication at the bidding of Cortes, to the infamy of his appearance on the walls of the Spanish quarters to rebuke his long-suffering people, he descended step by step on his way to the nameless grave where his dishonoured form was finally laid.[1]

[1] Prescott's description of the scenes of Montezuma's death-bed, with Cortes present, to whom he confided his daughters, is based upon the narration of Cortes made in the grant afterwards conceded to one of the daughters, Doña Isabel, when she married Alonso Grado, who is described in the same document as an hidalgo of Alcantara. It is to the Conqueror's credit that he recognised the debt of the Spanish crown to Montezuma, and that he procured the royal protection for his children.

CHAPTER XI

THE SORROWFUL NIGHT

Saving the Treasure—The Retreat from Mexico—The Survivors—Battle of Otumba—Arrival in Tlascala.

THE decision to leave the city silently and as secretly as possible, under cover of night having been agreed to by most of the captains, preparations for the flight were at once undertaken. The accumulated treasure that had already cost such rivers of tears and blood was piled in a room of the palace and, the royal fifth being first carefully separated and confided to the charge of Alonso de Avila and Gonzalo de Mejia in their quality of officers of the Crown, the remainder was divided amongst the officers and men according to the provisions already stipulated. The quantity, however, was so great that it was impossible to carry it away, and the men were cautioned against loading themselves down with heavy weights that might prove their destruction. The wiser among them chose pearls and precious stones, with only such a small quantity of gold as they could easily carry; the more avaricious could not turn their backs on the shining heap of metal, but weighted themselves until they could hardly move. The

hour fixed for departing, was midnight on the thirtieth of June.

To Gonzalo de Sandoval with the captains Antonio de Quiñones, Francisco de Acevedo, Francisco de Lugo, Diego de Ordaz, and Andres de Tapia, was assigned the vanguard, composed of two hundred foot-soldiers and twenty horsemen. They were charged with one of the most important duties of the march, namely the laying down of the portable bridge wherever the ditches in the causeway had not been filled in. This bridge was carried by four hundred Tlascalans who were under the protection of fifty soldiers commanded by a captain, Magarino. Cortes took command of the centre division of his forces, with Alonso de Avila, Cristobal de Olid, and Velasquez de Tapia as captains under him. Two hundred and fifty Tlascalans, protected by forty shield-bearers, dragged the artillery in this division, in which were the baggage, the treasure, the prisoners, and the women. The latter comprised Marina and two of Montezuma's daughters who were placed under a guard composed of thirty Spaniards and three hundred auxiliaries; two sons of Montezuma, the young King of Texcoco, and a few others who had escaped the general execution that afternoon, were among the prisoners. The rear-guard, under command of Pedro de Alvarado and Juan Velasquez de Leon, was composed of the main body of infantry and most of the force of cavalry.

The night was dark with a drizzling rain. Leaving fires lighted, the troop cautiously emerged at the hour of midnight into the deserted streets of the sleeping city, making its way as silently as possible along the street leading to the Tlacopan causeway. Magarino and his men had placed their bridge over the first ditch and the vanguard and artillery had passed safely over when, out of the darkness, was heard a cry of alarm that was quickly taken up by other Mexican sentinels, and in a moment the city was roused. The priests, keeping watch at the sacred fires on the *teocalli,* began to beat the sacred drum whose lugubrious roll could be heard for miles. From all sides the Aztec warriors fell upon their escaping foes, the surface of the lake on both sides of the causeway became alive with light canoes, darting hither and thither, from which volleys of arrows and sling stones were discharged into the now disordered mass of panic-stricken fugitives. The bridge, upon which their safety so greatly depended. was found to be wedged fast and immovable after the passage of so many horses and heavy guns, while at the second ditch, the people in the fore were being driven into the water by the pressure of the oncoming multitude from behind. Terror banished discipline and the retreat became a mad scramble for safety, in which each one thought only of himself. The second ditch became quickly choked with guns, bag-

gage, dead bodies of men and horses, over which the later comers sought to struggle to the opposite side. Cortes, leaving those of his own people who had managed to cross the second ditch, returned to the scene of confusion to lend what assistance he might to the rear-guard. Many of those who fell into the water met a more terrible fate than mere drowning, being seized by the Mexicans and carried off in their canoes to die on the stone of sacrifice. The third ditch was still spanned by a single beam, over which some of the more agile of the first to reach it, were able to cross, but the onrush from behind was too great and the attack of the enemy too fierce to allow many to profit by this narrow road to safety. The commander's voice, giving orders and seeking to calm his people, was lost in the uproar of battle, the shrieks of the drowning, and the wild shouts of the assailants; the scene of confusion at the second ditch repeated itself. It was at this ditch that Alvarado is alleged to have made his incredible leap, one of the exploits of the conquest so firmly rooted in three centuries of tradition and popular folklore that no proof, however lucid, of its entirely apocryphal character will ever dislodge it.[1] The last of the baggage and treasure was here abandoned, and the Mexicans allowed themselves to be di-

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cxxviii.; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 450.

verted from further pursuit by their desire to collect the rich spoils.

The dawn that broke after the Sorrowful Night found the remnant of the army at Popothla, a village situated on the shore of the lake. And what a sad remnant! Forty-six horses were dead, the artillery no longer existed, hardly a musket had been saved, the treasure was lost, all the prisoners had fallen, and the few men who filed before the commander, as he sat on the steps of a temple [1] with unaccustomed tears rolling down his cheeks, were soaked to the skin, destitute of arms, and so caked from head to foot with mud and the blood of their wounds, as to be scarcely recognisable. The actual number of the dead cannot be positively known, for the figures given by different writers are hopelessly conflicting. Prescott, whose judgment it is safe to follow, adopted the estimate of Gomara, according to which four hundred and fifty Spaniards and four thousand of their Indian allies perished during the retreat. Cortes, in his letter to the Emperor, reduces these figures to one hundred and fifty Spaniards and two thousand Indians, but his tendency throughout his reports was to minimise his losses. Oviedo [2] quoting Juan Cano, one of the gentlemen pre-

[1] The site is still pointed out and a venerable tree standing there is known as the *Arbol de la Noche Triste*, or "Tree of the Sorrowful Night."

[2] Lib. xxxiii., cap. liv.

sent, states that eleven hundred and seventy Spaniards and eight thousand Indians were killed and missing. Cano's estimate was made in Tlascala, and included all who fell during the whole of the retreat from Mexico until safety was reached inside the loyal republic, but his authority is questionable. He it was who invented the tale that two hundred and seventy men of the Spanish garrison, who were ignorant of the plan to march out of the city, were left behind in the quarters where, after surrendering to the Mexicans, they were all sacrificed. He does not explain how these men were kept in ignorance, while their comrades departed with the artillery, baggage, and all of the treasure they could carry. In Herrera's account of the plan to escape from Mexico by night, the historian records that Ojeda was particularly charged by Cortes with the care of the wounded and to see that no one was left behind in the hurried preparations.[1]

The Spaniards who remained behind were either unwilling to relinquish the gold collected in the quarters or, failing to cross the first bridge, found themselves driven back by the crowd of Mexican warriors that cut them off from joining their comrades. The latter explanation seems the more probable. Herrera fixes their number at one hundred; Acosta men-

[1] *Hist. General.*, dec. ii., lib. x., cap. xii.; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 456.

tions the fact but gives no figures. These unfortunates managed to hold out for three days, at the end of which time they were forced by hunger to make terms with the Mexicans. Although there is nowhere an authentic record of their end, there is little doubt as to their fate. Deplorable as were the losses, the condition of those who survived the Sorrowful Night and reached Tacuba was hardly less discouraging, for so broken and exhausted were they that not even in defence of their lives did they seem able to raise a hand, while their horses could scarcely stand on their trembling legs, much less carry their riders.

Of the captains, Francisco de Morla and Juan Velasquez de Leon were numbered amongst the dead. Sandoval, Alvarado, Olid, Avila, and Ordaz had come out alive, and both the interpreters, Marina and Aguilar, were likewise among the survivors. The vanguard was pushed on to Tacuba, where Cortes overtook them, collected in the public square and not knowing whither to turn. Just outside the city a group of temple buildings crowned a hilltop, and there he decided to rest his weary men, though they were obliged to make one more effort and dislodge some Indians who held possession of the buildings. The danger of another attack inside a town, where the Mexicans would have the advantage of roofs from which to fight and houses in which to take shelter, admitted of no

choice. Fortunately the Indian occupants offered no serious resistance and the Spaniards were soon decently lodged within the courtyards and buildings, where provisions and firewood were fortunately found. One whole day of blessed respite was vouchsafed the Christians, during which they dressed their wounds, repaired what arms and armour remained to them, and obtained some much-needed rest.[1] The Aztecs were evidently engaged inside their city and refrained from any attack. At midnight, Cortes resumed his march, guided by a Tlascalan who professed to be able to lead him to Tlascala, unless they were stopped; care was taken to leave the fires burning, the badly wounded were carried on litters, while those who were able to keep their seats mounted behind the horsemen. All went passing well until the morning light betrayed their whereabouts to their enemies, who thenceforth gave them no peace, following close on their rear, and harrassing them with piercing yells and showers of missiles. Provisions, there were none, save what little maize they chanced upon in the fields, and even the cornstalks were eagerly devoured; wild fruits, especially cherries, were their mainstay and a horse that was killed, was entirely consumed, not even his hide remaining.[2] One Spaniard,

[1] The church of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios stands on this site and the statue of the Virgin kept there is believed to be the one brought to Mexico by Cortes.

[2] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 303.

goaded by hunger and perhaps infected by the cannibalism of the Indians, cut open a dead body and ate the liver.[1] Cortes ordered him to be hanged on the spot. During this painful retreat many died of wounds and exhaustion, others, who were too weak to keep up with the main body, dropped behind only to be pounced upon by the pursuers and carried off to be sacrificed, while stragglers who wandered too far in search of food met the same dismal fate.

In six days of such marching the Spaniards covered only nine leagues and, though intermittent skirmishing had accompanied their every movement, they had encountered no considerable number of the enemy, until on the seventh day, when they crossed the ridge of hills that shuts in the valley of Otumba they beheld, to their dismay, a vast body of troops prepared to dispute their advance. This force, composed largely of men from Texcoco, Tlacopan, and the towns along the lakes, was commanded by Cihuacoatl and had been sent by Cuitlahuatzin to intercept the retreat to Tlascala, whither his spies informed him the Spaniards were directing their march.

Cortes quickly put his weary men in order of battle, the wounded being placed in a hollow square former by the infantry. Briefly, but in well-chosen and forceful words he spoke to them;

[1] Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 460.

it was victory or death that faced them all. From all sides the multitudes of warriors rushed upon the little company of Christians, surrounding, engulfing, and so entirely overwhelming them that they no longer distinguished one another, nor friend from foe. For hours the battle raged with varying fortunes, for, although the Spaniards performed prodigies of valour, the numbers of the enemy were such that the losses inflicted on them made no visible difference. Towards midday the Spaniards became disorganised and began to give way. The Aztec commander, who was carried by his nobles in a litter and was surrounded by his bodyguard, had taken his station on a hillock, from whence he could direct the movements of his troops. There also floated the great standard of battle. Suddenly across the mind of Cortes there flashed the recollection that the death of the commander and the capture of his standard were the signal amongst the Mexicans for a general retreat. Summoning six of his most trusty captains, he led a charge directly at the group on the hill, the horses forcing a passage through the compact masses of struggling warriors. In an instant the litter was overturned, Juan de Salamanca slew the prostrate Cihuacoatl, and seizing the standard he thrust it into the hand of Cortes who raised it in sight of all with a cry of victory. The effect was instantaneous, for the Mexicans, as though

stricken with a sudden panic, fled in all directions, abandoning the field to their exhausted foe. The wine of victory renewed the ebbing strength of the Spaniards and their allies who, but an instant before, had felt the faintness of certain death chill their veins, and in an instant they were in full pursuit of the flying enemy, until the field was cleared of all save the dead and the victors. So sudden and so marvellous was this victory by a handful of fugitives, worn out with fatigue and hunger and weakened by wounds and discouragement, that it seemed to the Spaniards only explicable by the direct intervention of their protecting saints, Santiago and St. Peter. Even Bernal Diaz, who on other occasions had doubted or at least had failed to perceive the celestial apparitions that his companions declared they beheld, conceded that on this occasion supernatural assistance won the victory.[1]

The spoils were sufficiently rich and very welcome. The Aztec host was estimated by early Spanish writers to number two hundred thousand men and their losses to have been twenty thousand; to the men engaged in that day's fight, no doubt these figures did not seem excessive. That night Cortes and his men slept

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cxxviii.; Gomara, cap. cx.; Sahagun, lib. xii., cap. xxvii.; *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 303.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. lxxiii.; Herrera, dec. ii., lib. x., cap. xiii.

at Apan, and the next morning, July 8th, they reached a fountain of clear water, where all drank and bathed and refreshed themselves before crossing the frontier of the Tlascalan republic. During the long march from Tacuba, Cortes had been assailed by doubts as to the reception that awaited him in Tlascala, where the news of the Sorrowful Night would have preceded him and where he arrived, no longer as a conquering *teule,* invincible, if not immortal, but as a wretched fugitive who, after leading thousands of Tlascalan warriors to their death in the Aztec capital, now craved shelter and succour from the republic. At Hueyothlipan, the first Tlascalan town after crossing the boundary, he learned his first lesson of Tlascalan loyalty; hospitably received and cared for, he was almost immediately visited by the four aged rulers of the republic who came from the capital to welcome and console him. Mingled with their words of comfort were gentle reproaches and reminders of their warnings to him of Mexican treachery and perfidy. They renewed their offer of a perpetual alliance and were already planning vengeance for the losses they had sustained. Cortes and the Tlascalan chiefs were made to understand one another; their tempers were of the same metal, for the effect of defeat upon both him and them was to confirm the determination to conquer. Leaving Hueyothlipan, the Spaniards repaired to the capital where an

abundance of provisions was furnished, and such care for the wounded as the simple pharmacy of these rude mountaineers could offer was supplied.

This second entrance of Cortes and his men into the chief city of Tlascala was marked by as great demonstrations of amity and enthusiasm as had greeted him on the occasion of his first reception there. Through the chorus of welcome there sounded, however, a minor chord of sorrow, for of all the hosts of Tlascala that had gone forth to Mexico in his train, many were missing among the sadly diminished troop of returning braves. The women of Tlascala crowded around, seeking their husbands, sons, and brothers, only to break forth into shrill wailings or to turn aside, convulsed with silent grief when those they sought were not found. Cortes was deeply afflicted at witnessing, helplessly, these demonstrations of grief and, through his interpreters he sought, as far as words could do so, to console them.[1]

Thirty days of repose within the hospitable city did much towards restoring the wasted forces of the men and healing their wounds. Cortes wrote that he lost two fingers of his left hand, but there is reason to believe that this passage in his letter to Charles V. was either inaccurately expressed or has since been miscopied.

[1] Sahagun, lib. xii., cap. xxvii.; Bernal Diaz, cap. cxxviii.

It is probably the fact that he *lost the use of two fingers.*[1] A bad wound on his head necessitated the removal of a piece of bone and brought on a severe fever, over which his magnificent constitution fortunately triumphed. Four men died and many others remained lamed or maimed for life.

During this period of recuperation, the news of several disasters reached Cortes, proving that the recent reverses suffered in Mexico had not been without their influence in other parts of the country. Forty-five Spaniards from Vera Cruz, who had undertaken to bring certain treasure that he had deposited in Tlascala to Mexico, had been intercepted and massacred on the road; another party, consisting of twelve men, had been surprised and slaughtered by the natives of Tepeaca, a province that bordered on Tlascala, while from all sides unwelcome evidences of his fallen prestige accumulated. A messenger whom he sent to Vera Cruz returned, bearing a letter from the captain there, conveying the encouraging news that the little colony had suffered no reverses and that the Totonac tribes remained faithful to their alliance.

It is significant of the unfaltering determination of Cortes to persist in his mission of conquest that, amidst circumstances well calculated to dishearten the bravest and which would cer-

[1] *Letters of Cortes,* tom. i., p. 307; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 464.

tainly have warranted his relinquishing, or at least postponing plans for further hostilities, it seems never to have even occurred to him that there was any other course open, than to reorganise his force and resume his efforts to subjugate the Mexicans. He solemnly renewed his pact with the rulers of Tlascala, forming an offensive and defensive alliance, in which both the obligations of each of the contracting parties and the compensations to be given the Tlascalans for their services were clearly defined. In the name of his sovereign and of the Crown of Castile, Cortes promised that Cholula and certain other towns should be ceded to the republic; that Tlascalan warriors should garrison the fortress, to be constructed in Mexico when the city should be taken, and that all citizens of the republic, their descendants and successors forever, should be free from every form of taxation and tribute. Other promises of minor importance were included in the articles of this treaty, of which the Tlascalans were faithfully observant, both in the spirit and the letter, while the Spaniards violated every pledge they had given. Cortes did, indeed, remember to obtain from Charles V., in 1528, a decree exempting the Tlascalans from taxation, but even this concession proved illusory and ephemeral. That once hardy people was gradually dispersed and lost its separate identity, while of its once flourishing capital hardly a vestige remains,—

a squalid village of poverty-stricken Indians. This people forsook their own race and threw in their part with the invading stranger. Without their aid, Cortes could not have conquered Mexico. Their motives were hatred and longing for revenge, both of which were gratified by their ally, though their own state was engulfed in the general downfall of the peoples of Anáhuac. The conditions of the solemn pact were ignored and, once their services were no longer required, the claims of the Tlascalan republic to a share in the fruits of the victory they so largely contributed to achieve were relegated to oblivion.

"Der Moor hat seine Schuldigkeit gethan,
Der Moor kann gehen."

While the mind of Cortes was busy with new schemes and plans for his future campaign, many of his followers were absorbed in reflections of a different complexion. It will be remembered that a large number of them, perhaps even the majority amongst the survivors, were those who had joined Cortes after the defeat of Narvaez. These men had been hurried from Vera Cruz up to Mexico, where they found themselves plunged into the sufferings and horrors of such fighting as they had never conceived and in the course of which a good part of their comrades had perished, while the survivors only reached safety

in Tlascala after a desperate retreat they were not likely soon to forget. From the date of their entrance into the Aztec capital, where their dreams of wealth and conquest promised to be realised, until the morning when the way-worn remnant of that dashing troop staggered wounded and bleeding over the Tlascalan frontier, barely a fortnight had elapsed, but within that brief period they had endured and suffered enough for a lifetime.

Many of these men were not properly soldiers at all; they were planters and well-to-do colonists in the Islands, who had joined Narvaez's expedition, tempted by the prospect of increasing their patrimony by a lucky venture in Mexico. Their inclinations recalled them to the scene of their interests, and those who had survived that awful adventure were prepared to thankfully return to the more modest but less perilous methods of fortune-hunting with which they were familiar in Cuba.

By the first of August Cortes was sufficiently recovered from his wounds to think seriously of beginning active operations. While the Tlascalan rulers and nobles were ready to support him, the common people grumbled as loudly as his own men. To quell the rising discontent and furnish occupation that might silence their complaints, Cortes announced a punitive expedition into the neighbouring province of Tepeaca, where the inhabitants had murdered

the Spaniards on their way from Vera Cruz, and where there were garrisons of Mexicans which he thought it wise to disperse. The idea of undertaking a new campaign or another assault on the Mexicans seemed to the malcontents, neither more nor less than a form of madness and, seeing that their not unreasonable arguments against these courses exerted no influence on their commander's decision, they drew up a written statement in which, after reviewing their situation and pointing out the rashness of continuing the war, they demanded to be led back to Vera Cruz immediately.

This document was read to Cortes by a notary public, and his old friend and ally, Andres de Duero, headed the deputation that presented it. Cortes was inflexible; he declared that Fortune always favoured the daring, and that as they were Christians, they must confide in the mercy of God, Who would never permit them to perish; the war must be continued and the country reconquered, because to abandon it now would be disgraceful to himself, dangerous to his men, and treasonable to their King; he had taken his determination to renew hostilities at the earliest possible moment and with greater vigour than before,[1] and he forbade any one to mention the subject again in his presence; in conclusion he gave leave to all who wished to desert him, to do so, for he preferred to have few but

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 306.

brave men, than many false or cowardly ones. As usual, he struck the right chord and the veterans rallied at once to support their leader so that, partly owing to his energy and partly to the taunts and jibes of those faithful to him, the disaffected party was silenced and agreed to remain, at least for the present. It is evident that few, if any, of the companions of Cortes understood him; his admirers, who were ready to follow him anywhere, were attracted by the magnetism which, as a born leader, he exercised powerfully over just such men as they. He was their *alter ego,* in whom they beheld reflected their own daring aspirations but united to powers of command as alien to their inferior abilities, as they were necessary to the success of their wild undertakings.

Cortes was indeed daring, but he was never rash.

His seemingly spontaneous decisions were, in reality, the result of plans carefully formed, of cautious calculations that seemed to take cognisance of every emergency, to forestall every risk. In the execution of his designs he was relentless, hence the unmerited reputation for cruelty that has obscured his really kindly instincts and many generous deeds. Both his resolution and his perseverance were implacable, and those who did not willingly bend to his will were made to break. *Sois mon frêre ou je te tue,* not inaccurately describes his attitude to

those who crossed his path. His equanimity was never disturbed by misfortune, and, as he sustained success without undue elation, so did he support reverses with fortitude; defeat might be a momentary check but was never accepted as final. Besides being compared with Julius Cæsar as a general, he has been ranked with Augustus and Charles V. as a statesman, nor does he unduly suffer from such lofty comparisons, for he unquestionably possessed many of the qualities essential to greatness, in common with them. He ruled his motley band with a happy mixture of genial comradeship and inflexible discipline and hence succeeded, where an excess of either the one or the other would have brought failure. He knew when and whom to trust and, though he was ready with his friendship, he avoided favouritism, with the consequence that his men were united by the bond of a common trust in their commander.

CHAPTER XII

REINFORCEMENTS AND A NEW CAMPAIGN

Montezuma's Successor—Campaigning in Tepeaca—Founding of Segura de la Frontera—Reinforcements Second Letter of Relation—Death of Maxixcatzin—The Brigantines—Ordinances—Headquarters at Texcoco.

AFTER the death of Montezuma, Cuitlahuatzin of Iztapalapan, who had been in command of the rising against the Spaniards, assumed the chieftainship and three months later (Aztec calendar) he was elected Emperor. His coronation was celebrated with the customary solemnities, the prisoners taken on the Sorrowful Night, both Spaniards and Tlascalans, serving as victims for the sacrifices. The newly elected sovereign had to cope with a situation bristling with difficulties—dissensions within, insubordination in the tributary provinces, the enemy without and, finally, and most terrible of all, the smallpox, that raged throughout the country. To this dread pest, called by the Aztecs *teozahuatl,* Cuitlahuac fell a victim, dying after a brief reign of eighty days, on November 25, 1520. During this period he had exerted every effort to unite all the forces of Mexico against the common enemy, sending embassies to friends and foes alike, urging that old differences be

buried for the moment and that all should make common cause to expel or destroy the strangers.

He found a supporter in Xicotencatl who, like himself, had never believed in the semi-divine character of the *teules,* but had from the first distrusted them and counselled their destruction. Maxixcatzin withstood Xicotencatl in the Tlascalan senate when the embassy from Mexico appeared, proposing an alliance; an acrimonious dispute ensued, in the course of which the old senator struck the young general and knocked him down the steps of the rostrum. Maxixcatzin profited by the divided opinions to impose his decision, and the ambassadors hurriedly withdrew to report their failure to their sovereign.

The importance to the Spaniards of the rejection of Cuitlahuatzin's overtures to the Tlascalans, cannot be overestimated. Had Maxixcatzin not prevailed over the eloquence of General Xicotencatl, Cortes would have found himself in a situation that would have taxed even his courage and ingenuity beyond their powers. He recognised his debt to the venerable regent and paid him a visit, for the express purpose of thanking him for his magnificent demonstration of fidelity.

The campaign against the Indians of Tepeaca having been decided upon, the Tlascalans furnished fifty thousand warriors led by nobles chosen from the four states of the republic.

Cortes promised the states of Cholula and Huexotzinco to the republic in recompense for the assistance furnished him.[1] The Spanish force numbered seventeen horsemen and four hundred foot-soldiers. The natives of Tepeaca were a warlike people of Aztec blood and were subjects of Montezuma, hence Cortes, according to his theory, was leading an expedition against Spanish subjects who were in open rebellion against the King. Montezuma having acknowledged himself a vassal of the Crown and having enjoined upon all his subjects to transfer their allegiance and pay their taxes to Cortes, as the representative of the King of Spain, it logically followed that the Tepeacans were in revolt, and must be reduced to order and obedience. A summons to submit having met with a defiant answer, the first battle was fought near Zacatepec and, although the Tepeacans and their allies of Cholula and Huexotzinco made a gallant stand, they were overcome and routed with great loss. The historian Herrera relates that the Tlascalans supped that night off the legs and arms of their enemies, which they roasted on spits, and that no less than fifty thousand cauldrons of human flesh stewed over their camp-fires. Cortes had forbidden human sacrifices and discouraged cannibalism, but the hosts of his allies were

[1] Ixtlilxochitl, *Historia Chichimeca*, cap. xc.; Motolinia in Icazbalceta, pars iii., cap. xvi.

beyond his control and their commissariat was provisioned according to their own barbarous custom.[1]

Town after town fell rapidly before the invaders until the capital was taken, sacked, and its inhabitants sold as slaves. The Spaniards selected the women and the boys, while the men fell to the share of the Tlascalans, who were well pleased by the fidelity of their ally to his promises. On the site of the capital, a Spanish town was founded to which the name of Segura de la Frontera was given. The position was well chosen, both as a strategical base and for keeping open the line of communication with Vera Cruz and the coast. From this point of vantage, Cortes next proceeded to the reduction of the town of Quauhquechollan (or Guacachula as the Spaniards called it), a place so admirably situated and strongly fortified as to be considered well-nigh impregnable. The town lay some five leagues to the south-west of Segura de la Frontera and, in addition to its population of thirty thousand people, it was garrisoned by an important force of Mexican warriors. The arrogance and exactions of the Aztecs bred treachery amongst the inhabitants, and the cacique of the place sent, offering to betray the city and formulating a plan by which this

[1] Bernaldino Vasquez de Tapia, tom. ii., p. 58; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 477.

might be successfully accomplished. Guacachula fell, and the spoil of the Aztec camp, which was unusually rich, was shared with the allies. Dividing his forces, Cortes next sent expeditions in various directions to reduce the minor villages and disperse the Aztec camps, with the result that the whole of the fertile region lying between Popocatepetl on the west and Orizaba on the east submitted to the Spaniards. Not only was his prestige re-established, his influence over the natives augmented, but he had attached his allies to him by a display of consideration and generosity that was irresistible.

Fortune, as Cortes had assured his wavering men, favours the daring, and something of his own spirit had evidently communicated itself to his lieutenants, inspiring them with the same audacity and cunning he was wont to display. At this time there arrived at Vera Cruz a vessel sent by Diego Velasquez, carrying thirteen soldiers under command of Pedro Barba, who brought letters from the governor to Narvaez. Pedro Caballero, who had been appointed captain of the port, visited the ship and, in reply to the commander's inquiries as to the success of Narvaez, assured him that the latter was in command while Cortes, with a handful of his followers, was a fugitive from justice. Suspecting nothing, Barba landed his men and two horses, but no sooner were they

on shore than Caballero declared them his prisoners; he brought everything of value off their ship which he then burned, after which he despatched the entire company to Tepeaca, where Cortes gave them an enthusiastic welcome, loading the men with presents, embracing Barba as an old friend and enrolling them all under his standard. No resistance was offered and Barba was made a captain.

Eight days later, the same stratagem was successfully operated on Rodrigo Morejon and his eight men, who arrived with some welcome provision of guns and stores. Francisco de Garay, who was renewing his efforts to colonise in the Panuco region, had sent a fleet of three caravels under Diego Camargo to found a settlement. This expedition was composed of one hundred and fifty men, seven of whom brought their own horses, and was provided with artillery and and other necessary stores. After disastrous encounters with the Indians and the loss of two of the ships, the survivors of this company reached Vera Cruz and were promptly marched off to join the camp in Tepeaca. A fourth ship of Garay's that had been sent to look for the missing three, after failing to discover them, likewise put in at Vera Cruz, and the entire equipment, numbering fifty soldiers and seven cavalry besides the sailors, went to swell the growing forces at Tepeaca.

Francisco de Garay deserved to succeed, for,

not discouraged by the disappearance of his four ships, he despatched still another, carrying one hundred and twenty foot-soldiers and fourteen horsemen. Upon their arrival at Vera Cruz, it was made clear to them that the settlement at Panuco was a failure, the Indians hostile, and the project impossible. They forthwith marched to Tepeaca and joined the army of the conquerors. More or less authentic news of the events in Mexico had spread to the Spanish colonies in the Islands, and the captain of a Spanish ship just arrived in Cuba with a cargo of arms, ammunitions, and general stores for the settlements in America, decided that Mexico was his best market and forthwith sailed for Vera Cruz. The captain of the port bought the entire cargo, and some of the crew, fired by the gossip of the settlement concerning the events in the interior, deserted and made their way to the Spanish quarters at Segura de la Frontera.

The hostilities in Tepeaca had meanwhile been succeeded by tranquillity; the policy of mercilessly punishing all who resisted and of welcoming with open arms and flattering speeches those who yielded peaceably had produced its natural result. From Segura de la Frontera, Cortes wrote his second *Carta de Relacion* to Charles V., in which he gave the Emperor a full description of all that had happened. In this letter which bore the date of October 30,

1520, he announced that he had given to the country he was conquering the name of New Spain of the Ocean Sea, for which he begged the Emperor's gracious sanction.[1] The name did not, however, originate with him, for Juan de Grijalba had already applied it to the country during his expedition along the coast from Cozumel to San Juan de Ulua in 1518.

Cortes owed not a little of his rapidly increasing authority over the natives to the ravages of the smallpox. The Indians recognised the right of conquest; to be ruled by the strong was, in their eyes, to be ruled by the right man and, as hitherto they had passed unprotestingly from the dominion of one tyrant to that of another, so did they accept their new ruler, once his power was established. They referred their local affairs to his judgment, they brought their disputes to him for settlement and, as many of their chiefs and nobles had died of smallpox and there were cases of disputed succession, these were likewise voluntarily submitted to his arbitration. Not only was he supreme military commander, to whom the provinces supplied levies of troops, but he likewise exercised the same civil jurisdiction

[1] This letter was first printed in Seville by Juan Cronberger on the eighth of November, 1522. It is known in the collection of his letters as the Second Relation. *Letters of Cortes to Charles V.* English translation by F. A. MacNutt, New York, 1908.

as Montezuma had done in the days of his supremacy and by identically the same title—the right of conquest.

The smallpox numbered among its victims the venerable Maxixcatzin, by whose death Cortes lost his firmest friend in Tlascala. The news that the chief was stricken down, first came from the ship's carpenter, Martin Lopez, who had been sent to the city to begin the construction of the brigantines. Maxixcatzin expressed a wish to die a Christian and Lopez sent his message to Cortes, who immediately despatched Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo to administer both the first and the last rites of the Catholic Church to the dying chief. He wore mourning for his dead friend, and amidst the celebrations and demonstrations that greeted his triumphal return to Tlascala, the loss he had suffered weighed heavily on his spirits. His first care was to recognise the young son of the deceased chieftain, a lad of thirteen years, as heir to his father's rank and estates, causing him also to be baptised a Christian and enrolled as a Spanish knight. Prescott observes that this was probably the first instance of knighthood being conferred on an American Indian.[1] The boy took the name of Lorenzo and became known thenceforward as Don Lorenzo Maxixcatzin.

Experience had shown Cortes that a most

[1] *Conquest of Mexico*, tom. iii., p. 407.

valuable auxiliary to his military operations against the city of Mexico would be a fleet of ships, and while still at Segura de la Frontera, he had sent Martin Lopez back to Tlascala with orders to begin the construction of thirteen brigantines, on much the same lines as those he had built for Montezuma. His own account in his second letter to the Emperor is the best that could be given of his activity during this period of preparation for the great war.

I sent four ships to the island of Hispaniola that they might return quickly with horses and people for our assistance; and I likewise sent to buy four others, so that they might bring from the island of Hispaniola, and the city of San Domingo, horses and horsemen, bows, and powder, because these are what we most need in these parts. Foot-soldiers armed with shields are of little service, on account of the great number of people and their having so great and such strong cities and forts. I therefore wrote to the licentiate, Rodrigo de Figueroa, and to Your Highness's officials in the said island, asking them to favour and assist me as much as possible, as it was of such importance to Your Highness's service, and to the security of our lives, since, on the arrival of this help, I intended to return against the capital and its country; and I believe, as I have already told Your Majesty, that it will again in a short time return to the condition in which I had it before, and that the past losses will be made good. Meanwhile I

am engaged in building twelve brigantines to launch on the lake, and already they are making the decking and other parts of them, because they have to be carried overland, so that on their arrival they may be joined and completed in a short time. Nails are also being made for them, and the pitch, sails, tow, oars, and other things which are necessary are being got ready. I assure Your Majesty that until I achieve this end, I shall take no rest, nor shall I cease to strive in every possible way and manner for it, disregarding all the danger and trouble, and cost, that may come upon me.

History hardly records a greater *tour de force* than the construction, transport, and launching of these brigantines; the glory of the conception belongs to Cortes, but the credit for its execution was due to the Tlascalans. Martin Lopez was assisted by a few other Spaniards, but the brunt of the work, as well as the cost, was borne by the Tlascalans.

Prescott recalls two instances of similar undertakings, but on a smaller scale and with less distance to cover; the first was during the siege of Taranto by Hannibal, and the second was at the same place seventeen centuries later under Gonsalvo de Cordoba. Balboa also built four small boats on the Isthmus of Darien, two of which he succeeded in carrying to the coast and launching successfully. For magnitude of the undertaking, distance of transport, number of men engaged, with no beasts of

burden to help them, and the importance of the issue at stake, the achievement of Cortes and the Tlascalans stands alone.

On Wednesday the 26th of December, a grand review of all the forces was held. The army was found to consist of forty horsemen divided into four squadrons of ten each; five hundred and fifty foot-soldiers, divided into nine companies of sixty; there were eight or nine pieces of artillery, in all not a very numerous force with which to lay siege to the capital of the Aztec empire. Halting before his troops, Don Fernando addressed them in a short speech, of which he himself gave a summary to Charles V.:

All being assembled for this review, I spoke to them as follows: They already knew that they and I had come to serve Your Sacred Majesty by settling in this country, and they likewise knew how all the natives of it had acknowledged themselves as vassals of Your Majesty, and how they had persevered as such, receiving good deeds from us and we from them, until, without any cause, all the inhabitants of Culua including the people of the great city of Temixtitan and those of all the other provinces subject to it had revolted against Your Majesty; yet more, they had killed many of our relatives and friends, and had expelled us from their country: that they should remember how many dangers and hardships we had endured, and how it was profitable to the

service of God and of Your Catholic Majesty to return and recover what was left, inasmuch as we had just causes and good reasons on our side. One cause was because we fought for the spread of our Faith, and against barbarians; another was because we served Your Majesty; another was for the security of our lives; and another because we had many natives, our friends, to help us. All these were strong motives to stimulate our hearts; for the same reasons I told them to cheer up and be brave. In the name of Your Majesty, I had made certain ordinances for maintaining discipline and regulating the affairs of the war, which I then immediately published. I enjoined them to likewise comply with these, because by so doing, much service would be rendered to God and Your Majesty. They all promised to do so and to comply with them, declaring they would very gladly die for our Faith and Your Majesty's service, or return to recover the loss, and to revenge so great a treachery as had been done by the people of Temixtitan and their allies. In the name of Your Majesty I thanked them for it. After this we returned to our camp on the day of the review, in good spirits. The following day, which was the feast of St. John the Evangelist, I had all the chiefs of the province of Tascaltecal assembled and told them that they already knew I was about to leave the next day to enter the country of our enemies; that they must see that the city of Temixtitan could not be captured without the brigantines which were being built, and that hence I prayed that they would furnish everything necessary to the workmen and the other Spaniards I left there, and

would treat them well, as they had always treated us. I also said that they should be prepared, if God should give us the victory, whenever I should send from the city of Tasaico [1] for the joinings, planks, and other materials for the brigantines, to send them. They promised to do so, and they also wished to send some warriors with me at once, declaring that when the brigantines started they would go with all their people, for they wished to die where I died and to revenge themselves on the Culuans, their mortal enemies.

These ordinances mentioned above were drawn up by "the magnificent Señor Fernando Cortes, captain-general and chief justice of this New Spain of the Ocean Sea and published in the city and province of Tlascala on Wednesday, the feast of St. Stephen, the twenty-sixth day of December, in the presence of the notary public Juan de Ribera," etc. In the preamble were explained the necessity and convenience of subjecting all human actions to law; the right of conquest was traced to the principles of religion, and the primary object of all must be to win the heathen natives from idolatry and procure their eternal salvation by converting them to the Christian religion. Were this war undertaken with any other intention it would be unjust, and everything won by it would have to be restored.

In conformity with the crusading spirit pro-

[1] Meaning Texcoco.

claimed in the preamble, the ordinances prohibited blasphemy against the name of God and the saints. Gambling was also discouraged by certain severe restrictions tending to so moderate play as to render it innocuous. Dice, however, were absolutely forbidden. Brawling, quarrelling, rivalries between different companies, and evil speaking, either among the soldiers themselves or against their officers, were not to be tolerated. The regulations governing military discipline and operations enjoined officers to keep to the posts assigned them and prohibited them under pain of death from charging the enemy without orders from the commander. Other articles prescribed that all booty taken, either in cities or on the battlefield, and of whatsoever character, must be delivered either to the commander or to an officer designated to receive it.[1]

It is evident from the temper and language of these regulations that the military organisation of the troops had made considerable strides since they first left Vera Cruz to march into the interior. Limits there undoubtedly were to the commander's authority, and there were occasions when his discretion tolerated a licence that his judgment reproved, but his policy was to unite the interests of all in the success of

[1] A more complete summary of these ordinances may be found in Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 502, and a reprint of the entire document in Prescott's *Conquest*, Appendix xiii.

their common undertaking and, by playing first on their religious sentiments, then on their pride as Spaniards, and last and always on their hopes of wealth, to enforce a discipline under which such bold spirits must have chafed. But if there were limits to his authority, there were likewise bounds to his forbearance, and while the former were vaguely defined, the latter were very positively outlined. Shortly after the promulgation of the ordinances of Tlascala, Cortes hanged two of his own slaves for robbing an Indian, and even a Spaniard received similar sentence for a like offence, though the commander discreetly turned his back while the fellow's companions loosened the knot before life was extinct.

The allies promised for the campaign formed an important addition to the forces. Their number has been variously estimated at from one hundred and ten to one hundred and fifty thousand men. Alonso de Ojeda and Juan Marquez had devoted much attention to drilling the Tlascalans; born fighters, every man of them had profited, not only by this instruction but likewise by the experience gained in the several campaigns fought under Spanish direction. Even the distrustful General Xicotencatl was not too proud to learn the art of war from the detested conquerors of his country, whose skill and courage commanded his reluctant admiration.

On Friday, the twenty-eighth of December, the army marched out from Tlascala by way of Tetzmulocan, headed towards Texcoco. The most difficult of the three roads leading from Tlascala to the valley of Mexico had been chosen, after a council composed of all the captains, as it was hoped their choice would hardly be foreseen by the Mexicans and hence they would encounter no organised opposition. The company was joined at Tlepehuacan by Ixtlilxochitl, prince of Texcoco and claimant of the crown. Ever since the Spaniards had been in Mexico, this discontented and ambitious intriguer had paid diligent court to Don Fernando, hoping, with his support and patronage, to seat himself on the throne of Acolhuacan. The new ally was cordially welcomed, sympathised with in his grievances, and encouraged to regard the Spaniards as his saviours. Whatever Cortes may, in his heart, have thought of this renegade prince, he was bound to view with satisfaction, and encourage by all means in his power, the dissensions and animosities that divided and weakened his enemies. The descent of the mountain-pass was accomplished and on Sunday, the thirtieth, the Spaniards found themselves once more in the valley of Mexico.

No troops came forth to dispute their advance, though on the surrounding hilltops fires blazed and columns of black smoke rose into the clear

blue of the sky, thus giving notice to all the towns in the valley of their enemy's approach. Groups of Mexican warriors were seen in the distance, apparently following their movements, and Cortes, who anticipated an ambush or a sudden attack at any hour, took occasion to remind the men of his orders for all to keep well together, to avoid straggling and to instantly obey the commands of their officers. It was victory or death, and they must maintain the reputation of Spanish valour. After this exhortation, to which all responded by promising obedience, they marched ahead, "as gaily as though bent on a pleasure party," to quote from the language of the *Relaciones*.

Texcoco had been fixed upon as the temporary headquarters, from whence Cortes proposed to reconnoitre the situation and reduce the outlying towns and villages along the lake shore, while waiting for the arrival of the brigantines, to begin operations against the capital. Although it was not expected that Texcoco would be occupied without severe fighting, a deputation of nobles approached the Spanish force a few leagues outside their city, carrying a golden pennon,[1] in sign of peace, and bringing a present from their King to the commander. They begged that their city might be spared, affirm-

[1] It was in the form of net-work or mesh of gold, and both Cortes and Bernal Diaz calculated its money value with the rapidity of practiced appraisers.

ing that they had never willingly sided against the Spaniards but only in obedience to the superior force of the Mexicans. Cortes, in reply, reminded them of the party of Spaniards they had recently murdered within their own territory and demanded the restitution of the treasure they had taken from their victims. Still protesting their innocence and declaring that it was by the Mexican Emperor's orders that the deed had been done and that the plunder had been taken to Mexico, they offered to collect what they could and restore it; meanwhile, they suggested that the Spaniards should pass the night in the neighbouring village as they had not been able to prepare quarters for them in the city. Cortes ignored their suggestion and marched on to Texcoco where the first thing that impressed him was the deserted appearance of the streets, which he had always seen thronged with a busy population. The vast palace of Nezahualpilli and its extensive dependencies furnished ample quarters for all the force. The reason of the Texcocan's efforts to prevent him entering the city that evening, was quickly discovered by some of the soldiers, who ascended one of the *teocalli* to survey the town and observed that the entire population was abandoning the place,—some in canoes on the lake, while others were escaping on foot to the hills. Coanacochtzin, the King, was already safe in Mexico and, as it was late in the eve-

ning, the efforts made to check this movement were too tardy to be of any avail. The Spaniards were left in undisputed possession of the deserted capital of Acolhuacan.

CHAPTER XIII

BACK TO THE CAPITAL

Destruction of Iztapalapan—Quauhtemotzin—First Expedition of Chalco—Arrival of the Convoy—Fall of Tlacopan—Death of Fonseca—Second Expedition to Chalco—Capture of Cuernavaca—Rescue of Cortes—Spanish Losses

EIGHT days passed after the arrival of the Spaniards in Texcoco, during which time they were exclusively occupied in fortifying the city, laying in provisions, and converting the place into a well-furnished base from which to conduct the campaign in the neighbourhood. Cortes had declared the throne of Acolhuacan vacant after the flight of Coanacochtzin and had ordered an election held that resulted in the elevation to the royal dignity, of Tecocoltzin, a bastard son of Nezahualpilli. This youth proved a weak tool in the hands of the Spanish commander, and the government passed practically into the latter's exclusive control.

The neighbouring towns and some tribes in the vicinity came, one by one, to offer their submission which Cortes received as a matter of course, assuring them that they were now vassals of Castile and were doing their duty in remaining faithful to their lawful sovereign.

The city of Iztapalapan, where Cortes had

once been entertained in the magnificent palace and gardens of its sovereign, was the first place designated for destruction, chiefly because it had belonged to Cuitlahuatzin, the arch-enemy of the Spaniards, and also because its inhabitants shared their ruler's hatred of the *teules*. Cortes led the expedition himself, having Pedro de Alvarado and Cristobal de Olid for his captains. The force consisted of eighteen horsemen, two hundred and thirty foot-soldiers, a large number of Tlascalans, and some Indians of Texcoco, furnished by the young king, Tecocoltzin.

Iztapalapan was utterly destroyed and six thousand of its inhabitants were killed, the remainder either saving themselves by flight in their canoes or being captured by the victors. An artful stratagem of the Indians that would have annihilated the Spaniards had it succeeded, just missed being successful. As the town stood on the edge of the lake and even partly over the water, it was protected from the rising tides by a dyke, which the Spaniards had passed on their way into the city. Cortes had noticed an opening in this dyke, through which some water was running but, in the heat of the attack, had galloped ahead without attaching any significance to the fact. Towards nine o'clock at night, when the sack and destruction of the burning city were completed and his men were weary with slaughter, it suddenly flashed across his mind that with the rise of the salt lake, the

waters would pour through the aperture in the dyke and cut off the Spaniards from the mainland. In short, they were taken in a trap and would drown to a man. His surmise was as correct as it was timely, for on reaching the place, that whole quarter was found to be already flooded, while the water was rising so rapidly that the booty and prisoners had to be abandoned and each man made a dash for safety through the insidious flood. Several Indians were drowned and the spoils of war were lost, but the Spaniards escaped the trap their cunning foes had set for their destruction.[1]

The news of the fall of Iztapalapan produced a great impression throughout the valley and was followed by the submission of several other dependencies of the capital. Cortes, in receiving their adhesion, made it a condition that they should deliver up to him all Aztec nobles or persons of consequence who were in their towns, his object being to seek through such persons to open communications with the capital and, if possible, to form inside its walls a party in favour of coming to terms with him. These overtures met with no response. Cuitlahuatzin had been succeeded by Quauhtemotzin, son of Ahuitzotl, a youth of twenty-five years, distinguished both for his bravery and his intelligence. He was the eleventh and the last of the Aztec emperors. Montezuma's presumptive heir

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. ii., p. 18.

had perished during the retreat on the Sorrowful Night, and his two remaining legitimate sons were said to be paralytics. His daughter, Tecuichpo, married Cuitlahuatzin and, on the accession of Quauhtemotzin, the widow espoused her late husband's successor. One of the imbecile heirs having meanwhile died, the newly elected Emperor removed the possibility of any future complications by killing the survivor.

Quauhtemotzin had followed the policy of his predecessor and had succeeded in gathering about his throne all the forces that remained faithful; while there were still waverers in the provinces, and many of the neighbouring states were maintaining an observant neutrality until events might show them on which side to range themselves, within the capital itself absolute unity prevailed. The messages from Cortes proposing peace, his offers to pardon the Mexicans, and his invitations to a friendly conference, all fell on deaf ears. Quauhtemotzin declared that the city would never surrender and that its last man would die fighting.

On his return from Iztapalapan, Cortes sent an expedition under Sandoval to the province of Chalco, whose cacique had complained of the exactions and oppressions of a Mexican garrison stationed in his city and had invited the Spaniards to assist him in expelling it. From all sides similar complaints and proposals reached Cortes and, in writing to Charles V.,

he declared that one of his chief regrets was, that he could not respond to the demands made upon him by the Indian allies and faithful vassals of His Majesty.

To make up for his inability to send Spaniards to the various centres of disaffection towards the Aztec rule, Cortes sought to overcome the local jealousies and ancient feuds that divided the tribes, and to form alliances between them for their mutual defence against the Mexicans. In these efforts he was successful,—at least, sufficiently so for his own purpose. During his expedition to Chalco, Sandoval stopped in the little town of Zoltepec, the scene of the murder of the forty-five Spaniards, of which mention was made in a former chapter. Melancholy relics of their dead comrades were found in the temples, even the heads of some of them, so well dried and tanned that their faces were easily recognisable, were exposed, while on the wall of a room in a building close by, they read the inscription: "In this place was imprisoned the unhappy Juan Yuste and some of his companions." From Chalco, Sandoval continued his way to Tlascala, from whence he was to assist in escorting the Tlascalans, who were to transport the brigantines to Texcoco. He was likewise charged to bring from Tlascala the young prince of Texcoco, known as Don Fernando, whom Cortes designated to succeed the youth, Fernando Teco-

coltzin, whose death had just brought his brief reign to a close. Both of these princes having been baptised under the name of Fernando, much confusion has been occasioned by the early writers attributing the acts of the one to the other, and even merging the two into one person.[1]

Shortly after crossing the Tlascalan frontier, three of Sandoval's horsemen, who were riding ahead as scouts, detected the fires of what seemed to be a vast encampment. Approaching cautiously to reconnoitre, it was discovered to be the camp of the Spanish ship-carpenters and the Tlascalans, who had brought the brigantines that far on the road and were encamped to wait for their escort from Texcoco. Twenty thousand Indians composed the convoy which, after four days of arduous marching, reached Texcoco with their unique burdens. Their arrival was made the occasion of great festivity and rejoicing. Cortes and his officers rode out to meet the procession, which was of such imposing length that six hours were occupied in filing before the commander into the city. Spaniards and Tlascalans fraternised, with demonstration of the heartiest good-will; the

[1] As if to further augment the complications arising from a number of Indian princes adopting the same Christian name, Prince Ixtlilxochitl was at this time baptised and assumed the name of Fernando. He was placed in command of the Texcocan forces.

shrill pipes and rude musical instruments of the Indians mingled their sounds with the music of atabal and cornet, while enthusiastic crowds rent the air with cheers of Castilla! Tlascala! Cortes, the destroyer of a fleet was the creator of another, for only his genius could have conceived and accomplished such an undertaking. The Tlascalan captains crowded about him, declaring that they had come to fight under his banner until their common quarrel was avenged or they fell together, and demanding to be led at once against their enemy. He responded cordially to these welcome demonstrations and assured them that he would provide them with plenty to do as soon as they were rested.[1]

While the work of putting the brigantines together was going actively forward in the canal that had been built to convey them onto the waters of the lake, Cortes planned a series of attacks on the towns in the neighbourhood that were still loyal to Quauhtemotzin. Marching in a northerly direction from Texcoco, the first engagements with the enemy were at an island-town in the lake, called Xaltocan. The resistance of the Mexicans was stubborn and the town was unapproachable, as the dyke had been cut and neither infantry nor horsemen could breast the swift current of water that rushed

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. i., p. 32; Gomara, cap. cxxiv.; Bernal Diaz, cap. cxl.

through the opening. Treachery, however, delivered the place to the Spaniards, for a Mexican deserter revealed the whereabouts of a shallow ford. Xaltocan was sacked and burned, while those of its inhabitants who had trusted to their defences instead of escaping in canoes were made prisoners. Continuing the circuitous line of march he had mapped out, Cortes passed through two abandoned towns and finally arrived at Azcapozalco, known as the "silversmith's town" on account of the artistic productions of its metal-workers.

The objective point of this march was the town of Tlacopan or Tacuba where he intended to establish temporary headquarters. The fate of Tacuba was not long in the balance and, as the Tlascalans nourished a special hatred for the inhabitants because of the injuries suffered there by their countrymen the morning following the Sorrowful Night, Cortes was unable to hinder a general massacre that ended in setting fire to the town, after everything of value had been pillaged. From Tacuba, one of the three famous causeways led directly across the lake into the city of Mexico; the same one in fact along which the Spaniards had fled in panic and confusion when they evacuated the capital. The skirmishing along this causeway was kept up daily during the commander's stay at Tacuba and though the Mexicans fought well, both on the causeway itself and from their light

canoes in which they approached the banks, the ultimate advantage invariably rested with the Christians. Renewed overtures for peace were rebuffed by the Mexicans and in reply to the invitation of Cortes that their chiefs would come to parley with him, the warriors answered that they were all chiefs and that whatever he wished to say, might be said to any or all of them.

During the six days he remained in Tacuba, Cortes obtained much of the information concerning the defences of Mexico he had come to seek. He found the Aztec troops well equipped and full of courage; nor did the fact that they had been worsted day after day in their encounters with the Spaniards seem to daunt them. Following the same road by which they had come, the Spaniards returned to Texcoco where the booty was divided, permission being given to the Tlascalans to depart to their own country with their share.

The defection of the Chalcans from the Mexican cause greatly enraged Quauhtemotzin, who sent a force to invade their province and punish their treachery, and Bernal Diaz states that twenty thousand Mexican soldiers crossed the lake in two thousand canoes. The Chalcans appealed in their extremity to Cortes, who again sent Sandoval to their assistance. During this campaign there occurred a break in the close intimacy existing between Cortes and his favourite captain, Gonzalo de Sandoval; the

latter having returned to Texcoco after an engagement at Ayachapichtla, which he considered decisive, was curtly ordered to go back and finish what he had begun. When he afterwards learned that he had been hasty and that the rebuke was unmerited, Cortes made such a frank and sincere apology for his injustice that the cloud which threatened to obscure their friendship was at once dispelled. Nothing, more than this little incident, illustrates the nature of the relations existing between Cortes and his officers, nor better shows the absence of petty vanity in the commander's character. His readiness to admit and repair a wrong done to a subordinate officer proved the quality of his moral courage and won him the confidence and obedience of his captains.

Three vessels which arrived at Vera Cruz, very probably from Hispaniola in response to the letters of Cortes to the *audiencia* in that island, brought the considerable reinforcement of two hundred men, seventy or eighty horsemen, and a large supply of arms, ammunitions, and military stores. Simultaneously there came into the same port a ship from Castile, having on board several persons of distinction, amongst whom were the royal treasurer, Julian de Alderete and a Dominican friar, Pedro Melgarejo de Urrea. A facetious passage in Bernal Diaz's history of the conquest describes this monk as bringing bulls from the Pope granting indul-

gences to the men, and states that he did such a thriving trade in his holy wares that within a few months he returned to Castile a rich man. The bulls in question were chiefly useful in guaranteeing lawful title to holders of property acquired during the conquest, whose rightful owners it was no longer possible to identify. The spoils of war captured in the sacking of towns did not fall within the terms of the bulls, though it is not improbable that there were soldiers whose elastic consciences enabled them to stretch the papal concession to suit their interests.[1]

Bernal Diaz's quip has furnished material for caustic comment on the business-like methods of the Dominicans in dispensing spiritual favours to the faithful. Alleged abuses of a similar nature in Germany were at that very time one of the chief reproaches cast on the Order in Europe, where the Reformation was just then convulsing Christendom.

The most welcome intelligence for Cortes that arrived by the ship from Spain was the news of the fall from power of the Bishop of Burgos[2]

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cxliii.; Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 537.

[2] Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos and titular Archbishop of Rosano, was of noble family and, when dean of Seville, had been named by King Ferdinand to the presidency of the newly constituted Royal Council for the Indies, which had charge of the affairs of the recently discovered realms in the New World. This ap-

The province of Chalco continued, despite the two successful expeditions of Sandoval, to be the scene of constant hostilities between Chalcans and Mexicans, and, as it was impossible to begin the siege of the capital before the surrounding country was freed from Aztec dominion and made safe for the Spaniards and their allies, Cortes determined to respond to the last appeal of the Chalcan chiefs for assistance, by marching thither himself. His intention was also to extend his operations by circling completely round the lakes and, in the course of his march, to occupy all the more important strongholds and disperse their Aztec garrisons. He had already secured such a result in the western parts of the valley, and once he succeeded in establishing his supremacy towards the south, the city of Mexico would remain isolated, in the midst of a broad zone under Spanish control. Two or three weeks were to be devoted to these preparatory operations, within which period it was hoped that the brigantines

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pointment was singularly unfortunate, as he possessed no aptitude for the post, and, being of choleric temper, touchy, vindictive, and given to favouritism, he seems never to have grasped the possibilities of his office, or to have comprehended the meaning of the events whose course he was called upon to shape. The Emperor's eyes were finally opened to his incurable defects of character, and his influence received its death-blow from the transactions of his agents with Cortes. He died March 14, 1524, having done his worst during thirty years with the interests confided to his direction.

would be completed and ready for use. The force to be employed was composed of thirty horsemen and three hundred foot-soldiers, with the usual complement of numerous Indians from Tlascala and Texcoco.

Gonzalo de Sandoval was left in command at Texcoco, with a force of twenty horsemen and three hundred foot-soldiers. The following day Cortes addressed the chiefs in a speech that was interpreted by Marina and Geronimo de Aguilar, telling them that the hour for united action against the capital was drawing near and that he would soon call upon them for the levies they had promised. He outlined the purpose of his present movement and then marched on to the town of Chimalhuacan-Chalco, where he intended to pass the night. An immense number of Indians,—some forty thousand in all,—joined his force, in addition to whom, a myriad of spoilers followed the army, attracted chiefly by the prospect of feeding on the dead bodies of the slain.

Sharp fighting took place in the country between Chalco and Huaxtepec, notably in the attempts to storm two rocky knolls on which large numbers of Indians had established themselves. In one of these attacks, the Spaniards were repulsed and obliged to withdraw, leaving the defenders victorious, but when the second stronghold was captured, all the neighbourhood, including the unconquered people on the first

hillock, submitted and made the usual terms of peace. From Huaxtepec, the road lay through Yauhtepec, where the inhabitants sought safety in the neighbouring town of Xiuhtepec. The latter town offered no resistance, and the troops rested there that day (Friday, the 12th) expecting the local caciques to return and make their submission. As none appeared, however, the town was looted and burned.

On the following day Cortes arrived before Cuauhnahuac (the present Cuernavaca) [1] the ancient capital of the Tlahuica tribes, situated on an isolated promontory at an elevation of more than five thousand feet and surrounded, save on one side, by a narrow but profound cañon. This town was, from its peculiar position, almost inaccessible; the bridges over the chasm had been broken and the place was defended by a strong garrison under Coatzin, its lord. Its capture was due to the intelligence and bravery of a Tlascalan warrior, whose remarkable exploit is hardly noticed by Cortes in his letter to the Emperor, but which is described by Bernal Diaz who claims to have followed close on the heels of the intrepid warrior. Two immense trees growing on opposite

[1] Cuernavaca is the present capital of the state of Morelos, and is one of the most beautiful and interesting towns in Mexico, while its situation is hardly excelled in picturesqueness and grandeur by any other in the world. The palace and church, which Cortes afterwards built there, still stand.

sides of the ravine, inclined towards one another until their branches met. The bold Tlascalan conceived the plan of crossing by this aërial bridge, and, with an agility worthy of his daring conception, he safely passed on the swaying boughs over the dizzy height and slid down the tree trunk on the other side, while the garrison of Cuernavaca was fighting elsewhere and unobservant of his achievement. About thirty Spaniards and a number of Tlascalans followed his example, three of whom lost their balance and fell into the stream below. Bernal Diaz says that it was a frightful undertaking, and that he himself became quite blind and giddy from the great height and danger. Indeed, it was no small thing for a man, weighted with arms and armour, to essay such a feat, and if the credit of the invention belongs to the Tlascalan, we cannot withhold our admiration from the thirty Spaniards who had the hardihood to follow him.[1]

After destroying the captured town and receiving the submission of its chiefs, Cortes retraced his march towards the valley of Mexico, crossing the rocky sierra and traversing a waterless region of pine woods, with such suffering to man and beast that some people even perished of thirst. Shortly after daybreak on Monday, the 15th, the Spaniards came in sight of one of the most beautiful and pros-

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cxliv.

perous towns of Mexico,—Xochimilco,—aptly described by its Aztec name, meaning "field of flowers." As the town stood somewhat out in the waters of the lake, the approach was by means of a causeway, similar to but smaller than those which connected the city of Mexico with the mainland. The Xochimilcans had fortified this causeway and defended the entrance with great spirit, but before the fire of the archers and arquebusiers, they were forced to give way and to retreat into the better security of their streets. With the hope of gaining time in which their families might escape by means of canoes, the Indians began parleying for peace; moreover, towards evening, a formidable body of well-armed Mexican troops came to their assistance, and the fighting was renewed. While leading a calvary charge, the horse on which Cortes was mounted slipped and fell, unseating its rider. In an instant his enemies were upon him. Neither in wit nor courage were the Tlascalans ever found wanting, and in this instance, it was a Tlascalan who first perceived the commander's peril and rushed to his assistance. Cortes afterwards searched in vain for this Indian who saved his life, but as he could never be found, dead or alive, he finally declared that he was persuaded that it was not an Indian at all but his holy patron, St. Peter, who had rescued him.

Clavigero pertinently notes that, in this battle as in many others, the Indians might easily have killed Cortes had they not determined to take him alive and sacrifice him. Bernal Diaz attributes the rescue of Cortes to a Castilian soldier, Cristobal de Olea, who led a body of Tlascalans to his relief, but makes no mention of any one particular Tlascalan. Cortes may, however, be supposed to know better, and he refers to Olea as "a servant of mine who helped raise the horse." Olea received three frightful wounds from the deadly *maquahuitl,* a weapon which the Mexicans wielded with great and formidable skill.

The fighting in, and around Xochimilco, lasted from the 15th of April until the morning of Friday the 20th, when the Spaniards arrived in Tlacopan and, though Cortes says little in his reports about the events of those days, his men suffered considerably. While a small division was engaged in pillaging some storehouses near Xochimilco, the Mexicans attacked them, wounding a number and taking Juan de Lara, Alonso Hernandez, and two other soldiers of Andres de Monjaraz's company, prisoners. These men were carried in triumph to the city of Mexico where, after being questioned by Quauhtemotzin, they were sacrificed, their arms and legs being afterwards taken to be exhibited in the neighbouring provinces as a forecast of the fate awaiting the remainder

of the white men.[1] Cortes wished to abandon the spoils taken at Xochimilco, rather than be cumbered with them, but yielded to the clamours of his men, who declared they were able to defend what they had taken.

The plunder was therefore placed in the centre, with a guard of cavalry to watch over it and, after firing the city as a penalty for the obstinate resistance of its inmates, the Spaniards marched by way of Coyohuacan to Tacuba. Numerous bodies of the enemy were frequently descried, usually at a distance, and it was evident that Quauhtemotzin was following the movements of his foe and that the entire country was under arms. From Coyohuacan, where a two days' halt was made to care for the wounded and gain some rest after the fatigues of the recent fighting, Cortes reconnoitred the causeway leading to Iztapalapan. At the junctions of the two causeways stood the small fortress of Xoloc, that barred the road to the capital.

Small skirmishes marked the day's advance to Tacuba, in one of which two more Spaniards, Francisco Martin Vendabal and Pedro Gallego, were captured alive. These two men were personal servants of Cortes, who had accompanied him throughout the perils and hardships of the campaign and on whose fidelity he could always

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cxiv.; Herrera, *Hist General.*, dec. iii., lib. i., cap. viii.

count. The commander made a rare display of feeling on this occasion which led to the composition of a romance or ballad, long in popular vogue:

En Tacuba está Cortes
Con su escuadron esforzado,
Triste estaba y muy penoso,
Triste y con gran cuidado,
La una mano en la mejilla
Y la otra en el costado, etc.[1]

Standing on a lofty *teocalli* in Tacuba, a group of the leaders, including Julian de Alderete and Fray Pedro Melgarejo, surveyed the valley, with the great capital floating on the waters of its lake; and one, Alonzo Perez, noting the pensive sadness of the commander's mien, begged him not to feel dejected, since losses and destruction were incident to warfare, but that of him it could never be said that like Nero he had watched the burning city, quoting the couplet:

[1] Prescott gives the following accurate and acceptable English rendering of these verses:

In Tacuba stood Cortes,
With many a care opprest,
Thoughts of the past came o'er him,
And he bowed his haughty crest.
One hand on his cheek he laid,
The other on his breast,
While his valiant squadrons round him, etc.

Mira Nero de Tarpeya
A Roma como se ardia, etc.[1]

Cortes answered, calling his companions to witness how often he had begged the Mexicans to make peace and save themselves, adding that his sadness was not for any one cause alone, but from thinking of all the hardships still to be endured in reconquering the city, which, with God's help, they must now undertake.

[1] Nero, from the Tarpeian rock,
Watched while Rome was burning, etc.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SIEGE OF THE IMPERIAL CITY

Action of the *Audiencia*—Conspiracy of Villafaña—Launching the Brigantines—Division of the Forces—Fate of Xicotencatl—The Aqueduct—The Siege—First Naval Engagement—First Assault

WHILE Cortes was occupied as described in the last chapter, in preparing to lay active siege to the Aztec capital, events destined to exert an influence on his future were happening in Spain and in the Islands.

Information of the defeat and imprisonment of Narvaez and the enrolment of his men under the standard of Cortes had finally reached Cuba, tardily indeed, because no ships had been allowed to leave Vera Cruz. Diego Velasquez, in the first heat of his rage against Cortes, prepared a fleet of seven or eight vessels, of which he himself took command, to sail for Mexico and reduce the rebel to obedience. Arrived within sight of the coast of Yucatan, more prudent, if less valiant counsels prevailed, and the irate governor preferred to return and nurse his outraged dignity in Cuba, rather than risk an encounter with his formidable enemy on Mexican soil. In addition to the cost of this fruitless demonstration, Diego Velasquez had

to bear the ridicule provoked by its failure. It will be remembered that the fleet of Narvaez had sailed from Hispaniola, in defiance of the positive prohibition of the royal *audiencia's* delegate. Ayllon, who accompanied it to Vera Cruz in the hope of restraining Narvaez's impetuosity and preventing acts of violence, had been seized by the commander and bundled back to Hispaniola. The *audiencia* did not meekly tolerate such contempt of its authority and the viceroy, Don Diego Columbus, appointed Alonzo Zuazo, *juez de residencia,* to proceed to Cuba and institute proceedings against the governor. Diego Velasquez and his partisans denied the authority of the viceroy to exercise such jurisdiction in Cuba and appealed the case to the mother country. Manuel de Rojas, a relative of Velasquez, conducted the affair in Spain and, with the support of the Bishop of Burgos, succeeded in staying further proceedings against Velasquez and Narvaez. The Bishop obtained from Cardinal Adrian, who was regent of the kingdom during the Emperor's absence, the appointment of Cristobal de Tapia to investigate all questions in dispute between Diego Velasquez and Cortes. He was given full powers to imprison those he judged to be culpable, to confiscate their property, and to refer the final judgment to the royal tribunals; the colonial authorities were instructed to grant him every assistance in carrying out his mission. Cris-

tobal de Tapia was the inspector of the royal foundries in Santo Domingo, a reputable man but totally incompetent to deal with Cortes. Both in Spain and Santo Domingo, those who understood the importance of what was happening in Mexico, opposed these measures of the Bishop, and when the authorisation of the regent was delivered to Tapia in Santo Domingo, the viceroy and others persuaded him to await the outcome of the operations Cortes was conducting in Mexico, rather than bring ruin upon him and possibly lose the country by interfering at such a critical moment.[1]

Though ignorant of the menace to his success that was being prepared by his foe at a distance, Cortes was met on his arrival in Texcoco at the conclusion of his march around the valley, by revelations of a design on his life amongst his own men. The Narvaez men had been shamed and laughed out of their plan to desert at Tlascala, but, in spite of the victories that had since attended all their commander's operations, their hearts were not with him, nor did their distrust of his seemingly wild and reckless scheme of conquest, yield place to confidence. One of these men, by name Villafaña, formed a conspiracy to kill Cortes, Sandoval, Olid, Alvarado, and several other of his principal officers, and he had worked out his plot in such detail, that the successors of the com-

[1] Orozco y Berra, tom. iv., p. 558.

manders to be slain, were already designated. A packet was to be given to Cortes, when he was seated at table with his officers in their quarters, and while he was engaged in opening the papers, the conspirators were to fall upon them and despatch them.

Whether too many men were involved in this plot, or too much time was allowed to elapse between its conception and its execution, is not clear; in any case, one of the men privy to it repented, and the day previous to the one fixed for carrying it out, he revealed everything to the commander. Calling his officers together, Cortes related what he had just heard, and then going all together to the quarters of Villafaña, they surprised him there in conference with several confederates. Realising that he was discovered, the traitor attempted to destroy a slip of paper that lay on the table, but Cortes was too quick for him and in glancing down the list of names written on it, he was much surprised and pained to find some whom he had considered his faithful friends inscribed amongst his would-be assassins. Villafaña was tried, found guilty, and after having confessed and received absolution was hanged, all with such military promptness that his dead body, swinging over the doorway of his quarters, was the first intimation to his confederates that the conspiracy had been discovered. Anxious indeed, and expectant of a similar fate were the

guilty ones; they were destined, however, to profit by a wisdom they failed to comprehend, for Cortes decided that the death of Villafaña was sufficient to strike terror into the others and to prevent a repetition of such infamy. He spoke to his men, explaining the reason for their comrade's execution, saying that Villafaña had swallowed the paper containing the list of his accomplices whose names were therefore unknown: he begged that if any one had cause for complaint against him, he should disclose it, for he would do all in his power to satisfy him. Self-congratulation on their escape from sharing the fate of Villafaña smothered all desire in the breasts of the malcontents to expose any grievances, real or imaginary, in response to this invitation.

The most important consequence of this conspiracy was the formation of a body-guard composed of twelve men, commanded by Antonio de Quiñones, that henceforth accompanied the commander. As for the traitors, whose names were known to him, Cortes never allowed his knowledge to appear, though he was careful never again to place these men in positions where they might work him mischief.

For weeks, the natives in the neighbouring villages had been diligently at work making arrows, lances, and other munitions of war,—thousands of each kind of weapon being pre-

pared; and now the brigantines were completed and lay in the canal, ready to be launched. Eight thousand men had laboured on the construction of the first fleet ever built and launched in American waters. Sunday the twenty-eighth of April having been fixed for the ceremony of launching the new vessels, all the Spaniards, officers, and men, confessed and received the Holy Communion, in preparation for the important event. Near the shore of the lake, an altar had been erected, decorated with what splendour their resources furnished, for the celebration by Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo of the mass of the Holy Ghost. After a sermon on the significance of the event about to take place and the object all must have in view in carrying on the war, the boats were solemnly blessed and, the ropes being loosed, one by one the little crafts glided from the waters of the canal onto the bosom of the lake. Each in its turn unfurled its flag to the wind and fired a salute, to which the Spaniards and Indians assembled on the shore responded with cheers, sound of music, and salvos of artillery. The celebration of the happily accomplished launching terminated with the singing of *Te Deum Laudamus*.[1] Of all the incidents of the life of Cortes in Mexico, the launching of these little

[1] Motolinia, *Hist. de los Indios* in Icazbalceta, pars i., cap, i.; *Letters of Cortes*, tom. ii., p. 58; Herrera, dec. iii., lib. i., cap. vi.

brigantines is the one at which all Christendom might most desire to have assisted.

A review of the forces which was then held, showed them to number eighty-seven horsemen, eight hundred and eighteen foot, including one hundred and eighteen arquebusiers and cross-bowmen. There were eighteen large guns, of which three were heavy field-pieces, and the other fifteen, brass falconets. The supply of ammunition was ample and, in addition to the shot, powder, and balls, there were some fifty thousand lances, tipped with copper points, which the Indians had made from a model furnished them by Cortes. In response to his summons, the Indian allies began to pour into Texcoco; fifty thousand of the best fighting men of Tlascala, well armed and making a brilliant show, were commanded by their young general Xicotencatl. The auxiliaries furnished by other tribes and provinces were ordered to assemble in Chalco, as they would be employed during the siege on the southern side of the city.

The division of the forces was very carefully planned by Cortes: two of the three divisions were to have their permanent base at the extremity of different causeways from whence attacks on the city could be made in unison. Pedro de Alvarado, in command of thirty horsemen, one hundred and sixty-eight Spanish foot-soldiers, and twenty-five thousand allies was stationed in Tacuba. Cristobal de Olid's base

was in Coyohuacan where, with thirty horsemen, one hundred and seventy-eight foot-soldiers, and twenty thousand Indians he held the great causeway leading to the fortress of Xoloc and the capital. The third division was commanded by Gonsalvo de Sandoval, and consisted of twenty-four horsemen, one hundred and sixty-nine foot-soldiers, and more than thirty thousand Indians from Tlascala, Cholula, and Chalco. Sandoval was to go first to Iztapalapan and, after completing the destruction of that place, was to join the camp of Olid at Coyohuacan, his ultimate movements to depend on the later orders he would receive from Cortes.

The thirteen brigantines,—or rather twelve, for one was found to be defective,—with Cortes in command, were manned by three hundred men. Although a number of men of the expedition had been sailors and fishermen and consequently knew something about handling boats, none of them wanted to act as rowers for the brigantines, and it was with difficulty that the crews were completed. Many of the natives of Palos, Triana, and other seaports, who were ordered to take the oars, even objected on the score of their gentle birth, but the commander enforced his orders in spite of all excuses and protests. Each brigantine displayed the royal standard as well as its own particular ensign, and carried a falconet. Before despatching the divisions to their several destinations,

Cortes made a stirring address to the united forces, reminding them of the extraordinary good fortune that had recently sent them reinforcements, arms, ammunition, and repeated victories, even beyond their most sanguine hopes; these were all so many proofs of divine protection, for they were fighting in a holy cause,—for the spread of the Faith and the extension of the dominions of the Catholic sovereigns of Spain. There was, therefore, every reason for confidence and rejoicing,—they must conquer or they must die.[1]

These sentiments found a ready echo in the hearts of his hearers, who burst forth into acclamations and protests of fidelity. The veterans of the little band had weathered the severest trials and could honestly view with satisfaction their present condition as the best they had known since they landed in Mexico; never before had there been such a force, such artillery and ammunition, so many allies and horses and, most of all, a fleet. The lukewarm men of the Narvaez group, repentant, doubtless, of their recent treachery and thankful for their escape from sharing Villafaña's fate, counted on opportunities of making good their fault by deeds of heroism, while all, whether they would or not, were whipped on by the obvious truth of their leader's reminder, that it was "conquer or die."

Cortes makes no mention in his report to the

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. ii., p. 59.

Emperor, of an incident of bad augury that occurred just at this time. This was the desertion of the Tlascalan general, Xicotencatl, who left the army accompanied by a few followers, and returned to Tlascala. Various reasons are given for his action; Bernal Diaz attributes it to jealousy of Chichimecatl and a perfidious plan to get possession of his lands while the latter was absent, fighting against Mexico. Herrera ascribes his desire to return home, to a love affair.[1] It seems, however, that there had been a quarrel between a Spanish soldier and a Tlascalan chief, in which the latter was badly wounded; the matter was hushed up, so that Cortes should not hear of it, as he was very strict in such matters; thus the soldier remained unpunished and, as Xicotencatl was a relative of the wounded chief, he left.[2]

Cortes first sent some Tlascalans to seek to induce him to return and, this failing, he despatched some Spanish horsemen with orders to arrest the general and bring him back. He simultaneously sent news of the affair to the senate of Tlascala, informing the senators that amongst Spaniards, desertion was punishable by death. The versions of Xicotencatl's end do not agree. Herrera describes his death by hanging in public at Texcoco, while Bernal Diaz says he was executed where he was captured.

[1] Lib. i., cap. xvii.
[2] Prescott, lib. vi., cap. iv.

Xicotencatl had always mistrusted the Spaniards nor could the blandishments of Cortes, nor the popular sentiment in Tlascala ever change his opinion. He was opposed to the alliance and, after fighting the Spaniards in the field, he continued to oppose them in the councils of his people. Cortes was aware of his sentiments and conscious of the bad effect such an example of desertion would have if left unpunished; it is also likely he was glad to be rid of an ally on whose fidelity he could not count. Xicotencatl's act of desertion was indefensible and its penalty, according to the code of Tlascala, was death.

In addition to the forces named, the Mexican historian Ixtlilxochitl enumerates allies from Itzocan, Tepeaca, Otumpa, Tollantzinco, Xiloltepec, and other provinces, that bring the sum total up to two hundred thousand fighting men; fifty thousand workmen were ready for road-making, bridge-building, repairing arms, and supplying new ones; of camp servants there were numbers in proportion to the needs of this vast army, so that, all told, the Indian forces led by Cortes against Quauhtemotzin fell little short of three hundred thousand men.[1]

On the twenty-second of May, the divisions of

[1] Ixtlilxochitl, *Relacion*, p. 20. These numbers are greatly reduced by other writers; as has been already noted, all such estimates are not based on actual counting and must be taken as expressing the idea of multitude.

Alvarado and Olid marched out of Texcoco to take up their respective positions, and after two days occupied in their march through deserted towns where no opposition was offered, the siege of the Mexico-Tenochititlan may be dated from the twenty-fifth day of May, when these two divisions arrived in Tacuba where Alvarado and his force were to remain. The two captains were not friends; at Acolman, where the first night out from Texcoco had been passed, a squabble had arisen over the selection of houses in the town for their respective quarters, that was only prevented from ending in bloodshed by the intervention of Fray Pedro Melgarejo and Luis Marin, who were despatched, as soon as Cortes heard of the quarrel, with instructions to pacify the litigants.

The first blow struck at the city, was to cut off its water supply by destroying the conduits that carried the water from Chapultepec into the capital. The Mexicans, realising the importance of the aqueduct, had foreseen that it would be attacked and had prepared for its defence. Immediately after mass, which was said by the chaplain, Juan Diaz, both captains led an attack on the aqueduct; the engagement was a sharp one, but the Spaniards were victorious and succeeded in breaking the conduit

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Alaman, *Disertacion*, i., estimates a total of 150,000 allies and Cortes himself mentions 50,000 Tlascalans, but no others.

which was built of stone, mortar, and wood; three Spaniards were wounded and a number of Indian allies were killed. After some further fighting the next day, Olid proceeded to his designated headquarters at Coyohuacan some two leagues distant from Tacuba, so that the two commanders could henceforward co-operate with one another in their operations against the enemy.

On the thirty-first of May, Gonzalo de Sandoval left Mexico and marched to Iztapalapan, passing through Chalco, where his force was joined by large bodies of Indian allies, who were there awaiting him. The three divisions having taken their designated places, Cortes embarked on his flagship, and the little fleet moved slowly out of the harbour of Texcoco, headed for Iztapalapan, where it was part of his plan to assist Sandoval. Signal fires on the neighbouring hills sent their columns of smoke towards the sky and, being repeated from one point to another, the entire valley was promptly informed of the Spanish commander's movements. As the brigantines neared the rocky island of Tepepolco,[1] the Aztec garrison let fly a volley of arrows and raised cries of defiance; not wishing to leave this fortified stronghold of his enemies behind him, Cortes landed one hundred and fifty men who, after a fierce contest,

[1] Afterwards the property of Cortes and called Peñol del Marques.

succeeded in reaching the rocky summit. Every man of the garrison died at his post, only the women and children being spared. "But it was a beautiful victory," wrote Cortes in his third letter of relation to Charles V. Meanwhile, in response to the signals of alarm, fifteen hundred canoes, filled with warriors, had come out from the canals of the capital and were seen advancing towards the brigantines. Cortes ordered his ships to remain perfectly quiet; he was anxious that the first encounter with the enemy's boats should be decisive in establishing his supremacy on the lake. This inactivity mystified the Indians whose canoes, after approaching to within a short distance of the brigantines, also stopped, and the men of the rival fleets regarded one another for a short space, in silence.

Again, as Cortes predicted, "Fortune favoured the daring," for a land wind suddenly sprang up astern of the brigantines, whose quickly-set sails swelled with the freshening breeze, bearing them with impetuous force into the very midst of the Mexican canoes. The frail craft were smashed to splinters, overturned and sunk by the superior size and weight of the Spanish boats, from whose decks a rapid fire of musketry and the discharge of the falconets created terrible havoc among the wreckage of boats and the drowning Aztecs. The few who managed to escape the general destruction were pursued for a distance of three leagues, until they took

refuge in the canals of the city, where the brigantines were unable to penetrate. The operations on the water being plainly visible to the Spanish garrison at Coyohuacan, Cristobal de Olid took advantage of the confusion that had overtaken the enemy, to march his entire force out onto the causeway leading to the capital and, in spite of the determined resistance of the Mexican troops, he managed to capture several bridges and to kill and scatter their defenders. Night was falling when the brigantines anchored off the little fortress of Xoloc that stood, as has been said, at the point where the causeway leading to Coyohuacan joined the main road to Iztapalapan.

The strategic value of the position at once struck Cortes, who changed his original plan, which was to use Coyohuacan as the station for his fleet, and decided then and there to make Xoloc his headquarters; the anchorage for the ships was good and the roads were open to both Iztapalapan and Coyohuacan, while just before him lay the city. The fortress being small, its Aztec garrison was not numerous and was dislodged with little difficulty. The heavy guns were so mounted as to command the causeway leading into Mexico, half a league distant, while the brigantines prevented the enemy's approach in canoes. Orders were sent to Olid to advance with one half of his force to Xoloc, while Sandoval was instructed to abandon Iztapalapan,

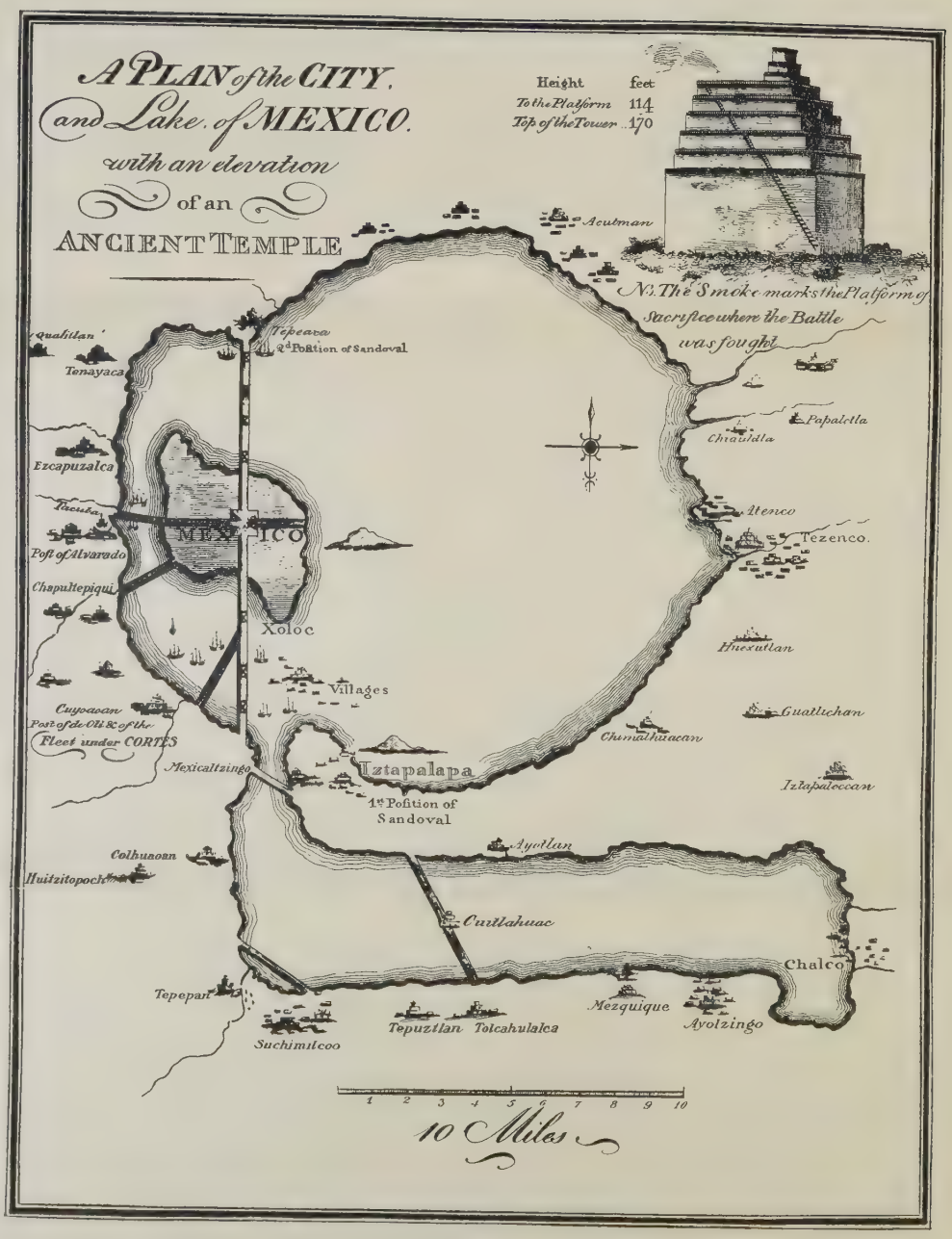
now practically destroyed, and, after sending fifty of his men to reinforce the camp on the causeway, to proceed with the remainder to the garrison in Coyohuacan. Thus Cortes proceeded to lay siege to Mexico-Tenochtitlan.

The fortifications of Xoloc were improved and strengthened, a channel was dug across the causeway to allow the brigantines to pass through to the other side and, after five or six days of incessant fighting, by day and night, the great southern and western causeways were in absolute possession of the Spaniards. The northern causeway, leading to Tepeyaca, was still open, affording facilities for provisioning the city or of escaping from it, were the Mexicans so inclined. Gonzalo de Sandoval was sent to occupy a position on that avenue of approach, after which the isolation of the capital became complete, save for the coming and going of the swift canoes which, in spite of the activity and vigilance of the brigantines, frequently managed to escape capture.

Sunday, the ninth of June, was fixed for the first general assault on the city, by the united forces of Spaniards and allies, sustained by the fleet. Mass was said at an early hour, and from each of the three positions the attacking forces advanced along the causeway. The column led by Cortes found the bridges spanning the ditches that divided the causeway at intervals destroyed, and at each of these open canals a barricade

defended by Mexicans had been erected; the first was captured and crossed with little difficulty; at the second the fighting was sharper and more prolonged but, with comparatively little effort, the Spaniards succeeded, after two hours, in penetrating to the main square of the city. The artillery and brigantines had rendered the greatest services up to this point, for one discharge of the guns would sweep the street from end to end, while from the ships, which moved along each side of the causeway, a merciless fire was poured into the Aztec entrenchments at the bridges.

It will be remembered that the chief temple surrounded by the *coatepantli,* or wall of serpents, and dominated by the great *teocalli,* stood in this square. Placing a piece of artillery at the entrance, Cortes raised his battle cry of "Santiago" and led a charge that drove the Aztecs pell-mell before him into the sacred enclosure of the temple. From the terraces of the pyramid, the priests called on the god of war and animated the warriors fighting below in the court-yard, while over the noise of the battle was heard the ominous booming of their great drum of serpents' skins that stood on the summit of the *teocalli.* Vain was the effort to defend their temples; the inadequate weapons of the Mexicans could not withstand the Spanish steel, and after a brief but fierce struggle, the Christians reached the top of the pyramid and, for the



PLAN OF MEXICO CITY

From *The Conquest of Mexico*, by Diaz del Castillo. Translated by Maurice Keatinge

second time, smashed the idols, hurling them down into the stone-paved court-yard, accompanied by the bodies of the priests who served their blood-stained altars. As though galvanised into new courage by the sacrilegious destruction of their deities, the Mexicans fell with unexampled fury on the Spaniards as they descended from the pyramid and, taking them somewhat by surprise, they drove them out from the court-yard into the square, where fresh troops attacked them, thus taking them between two fires. Bewildered by the suddenness of the onslaught, the Spaniards lost their presence of mind; their ranks were broken and they were hopelessly scattered, each one flying for his life amidst the crowd of foes. The allies became panic-stricken, thus adding to the general rout, which all the efforts of their leaders were unable to check.

The threatened disaster was only stayed by the opportune arrival of a small body of horsemen; no familiarity had sufficed to quite disillusionise the Mexicans about the horses and, failing on this occasion to realise their insignificant number, they yielded to their unreasoning fears and the conviction that a large body of cavalry was upon them; they abandoned their victorious onslaught and fled from the square.

The long day of incessant fighting, with varying fortune, was drawing to its close, and Cortes ordered the trumpets to sound the retreat,

which was effected in good order, the allies taking the lead, followed by the Spanish foot-soldiers while the rear was protected by the horsemen. The operations of Alvarado and Sandoval on the other causeways were less successful, owing largely to the fact that they had no brigantines to sustain them and, in part also, to the greater number of barricades that had to be captured. Thus ended the first general assault on the beleaguered city.

Cortes in reporting this day's fighting to Charles V. imperturbably assures the Emperor that neither the Spaniards nor their allies sustained any loss, though he admits there were some wounded.[1] It seems, however, incredible that both Spaniards and allies should have suffered no loss in this long day's fighting, which, though it ended to their advantage, had witnessed their utter rout and the capture of the field-gun on the square. Bernal Diaz, who was fighting under Alvarado, on the causeway from the Tacuba side, gives a more convincing description of the daily losses and the wounds, which the men had to dress as best they could when they returned at night to their camp. There was a soldier, Juan Catalan, who was reputed to have the gift of healing by prayer and charms and who had his hands full, as the Indians also placed faith in him and brought him

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. ii., p. 77.

all their wounded. "I say" the soldier-chronicler piously adds, "that it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ, in His mercy, to give us strength, and to speedily heal us."

CHAPTER XV

THE FALL OF THE AZTEC EMPIRE

Progress of the Siege—Aztec Victories—Attack on Tlatelolco—The Great Disaster—Sotelo's Catapult—Last Days—Quauhtemotzin Captured and Tortured—The Victory and the Losses—Fruits of Conquest

ALTHOUGH the first general assault on the city had not resulted in a complete victory for the Spaniards, the destruction of the great temple had dealt the prestige of the Mexicans a telling blow. Observant caciques in the neighbourhood, who had still wavered, hesitated no longer, but hastened to Xoloc to offer their allegiance to Malintzin. The people of their tribes were chiefly useful in building huts for the soldiers, bringing in provisions, and performing the menial labours of the camp. Prince Ixtlilxochitl of Texcoco provided a fresh force of fifty thousand warriors, and the influence of his action on the lesser caciques of the valley was immediately apparent. The defection of the lake-towns cut off the source of the city's supplies.

Cortes followed up his first attack by a second on the following day, penetrating again to the great square, where he burned one

of the most interesting and beautiful buildings in Mexico,—the imperial aviary. The fighting was always of the same character, the Spaniards storming the barricades erected at the open ditches on the causeways, then struggling through the water to the opposite side to pursue the retreating foe. The brigantines raked the causeways with a cross fire and penetrated each day a little farther into the larger of the city's numerous canals. The large guns were fearfully destructive, but the horsemen were even more dreaded by the natives, who could not entirely divest themselves of their superstitious terror of the cavaliers.

At the hour of vespers, the Spaniards retreated to their several quarters and, on entering the city the following morning, they invariably found that the water courses they had filled up with earth, adobes, and other available rubbish, had been dug out again during the night and the barricades rebuilt. One by one the few remaining tribes and cities of Anàhuac abandoned the beleaguered capital to its fate.

The perfidy of these people dealt a terrible blow to Quauhtemotzin and the defenders of Tenochtitlan for, to their defection, they added treachery of the blackest complexion. Their chiefs appeared before the Emperor with offers of assistance, which were gratefully accepted by the hard-pressed sovereign. Their troops

were assigned places, and when the fighting began, made a feint at first of attacking their Spanish allies, but afterwards suddenly turned their arms against the Mexicans, who were taken completely by surprise; their chiefs quickly rallied, however, and bringing up fresh troops, the traitors were soon severely punished, and leaving many dead and prisoners, the remainder fled from the city and rejoined the besiegers. The prisoners were upbraided by Macehuatzin, lord of Cuitlahuac, who decapitated four of the principal ones with his own hand and delivered the others to Quauhtemotzin, who ordered them to be sacrificed in the temples of Mexico and Tlatelolco.[1] One of the worst effects of the defection of the lake-towns was to cut off the supplies of fresh water and food, which, in spite of the vigilance of the brigantines, they had found means to transport into the blockaded city. Henceforth hunger was added to the horrors of the siege, while the Spanish camp was enriched by supplies of fresh provisions.

The force at the disposal of Cortes was too small to admit of establishing a night-watch to protect the ditches and barricades captured during the day; his men were exhausted by the day's fighting, and the allies were of little avail unless led by Spaniards. He therefore reluc-

[1] Sahagun, lib. xii., cap. xxxiv.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. cxiii.

tantly ordered that all the buildings of the city should be destroyed, street by street, as the troops advanced; the Mexicans were thus forced, little by little, towards the Tlatelolco quarter of the town, of which the central point was the great market-place. Alvarado adopted other tactics on the Tacuba causeway and mounted a guard of forty soldiers, relieved at regular intervals during the night, to defend the positions he had captured.

Quauhtemotzin showed himself as resourceful as he was determined, and for more than two months he held the mighty force of the besiegers at bay. Though attacked from three different positions, he not only maintained an able defence, but, departing from the Aztec custom of never fighting after nightfall, he organised night attacks on the Spanish camps that kept the exhausted Christians constantly on the alert. In his reports to Charles V., Cortes says nothing of the losses suffered by the Spaniards during the operations of these days, though they were considerable enough to merit notice. The Mexicans had arranged a clever device for capturing the brigantines, which was partially successful. They stationed thirty of their largest canoes, filled with warriors, amongst some rushes, and after driving a number of stakes into the bottom of the lake in such wise as to impede the movements of the brigantines, some smaller canoes,

such as usually carried supplies, were then sent into the open, where they were quickly discovered by the Spaniards, who gave chase, allowing themselves to be decoyed into the trap, where the stakes interfered with their movements. The captain of one of the brigantines, Portillo, was killed and Pedro Barbo was mortally wounded; many others were wounded and the Mexicans carried off one brigantine in triumph. They paid dearly for their victory, however, for Cortes was so much mortified by this disaster that a counter-ambuscade was prepared, which drew the Mexicans successfully, and in which they suffered severe loss of many canoes, a number of slain, and others prisoners.

The Aztecs had one formidable warrior of giant stature called Tzilacatzin, who was wonderfully skilful with his sling, every stone he sent bringing down its man. He was made the aim of all the Spanish archers and musketeers, his great stature making him easily distinguishable, but they could never hit him. On one of these days, eighteen Spaniards were captured alive and sacrificed, their bodies being afterwards cut up and distributed to be eaten. Another day, a furious assault led by a daring warrior of Tlatelolco called Tlapanecatl, almost succeeded in capturing the ensign, Corral, who carried the Spanish standard, and did carry off no less than fifty-three Castilian

prisoners, besides numerous of the allies and four horses, all of whom were sacrificed in various temples. Alvarado's division was decoyed by the Mexicans into a cleverly devised trap between two waterways, and completely routed. In this disaster, which Cortes only mentioned briefly in his Third Letter of Relation, five more Spaniards were taken alive, besides many Indian prisoners; a horseman and his horse were drowned and the survivors, all badly wounded and utterly demoralised, drew off to their camp amidst the victorious shouts of the Mexicans. The latter pursued them up to the very camp, but were repulsed with loss by a small battery stationed there, which was worked by an able engineer, named Medrano. The guns were so placed that they raked the entire causeway and as the brigantines used their falconets on both sides, the camp was effectively protected.[1] Alvarado was an intrepid commander, and, nothing daunted by his repulse, he continued for four days to renew his attack at the same point, until on Friday, June 28th, he finally captured the bridge. Six more Spaniards perished in these combats, besides the wounded and allies, whose dead were unnumbered.

The market-place of Tlatelolco had become the objective point towards which the attacks

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cii.; Sahagun, lib. xii., cap. xxvi.; Torquemada, lib. iv., cap. xciii.

from the three Spanish camps were directed, and its capture became a matter of rivalry between the men of the different divisions, for all were persuaded that with its fall, the city must make terms and capitulate. Yielding to the importunities of his impatient troops, Cortes called a council of war in which he allowed his own judgment to be overruled, and a concentrated effort to reach the market-place was decided upon. The day fixed was Sunday, June 30th, and, after the celebration of mass, Cortes left Xoloc with his entire force, the fleet of seven brigantines and some three thousand canoes of the Indian allies having already moved off towards the canals leading into the city, from whence they were to sustain their part in the approaching combat. Halting at the Tacuba causeway, he proceeded to outline his plan of action and to assign to each officer his position. Alderete, in command of seventy foot-soldiers, and some twenty thousand allies, with a rear-guard of eight horsemen, was ordered to advance along the main street leading directly to the market-place. His force was accompanied by a large number of Indians, whose business it was to fill in the ditches crossing the streets, from which the bridges had been removed. Andres de Tapia and Jorge de Alvarado, a brother of Pedro, were in command of eighty soldiers and ten thousand allies and, after planting two

heavy guns at the entrance of one of the streets, were also to advance towards Tlatelolco; eight horsemen were left to protect the gunners. Cortes himself commanded one hundred foot-soldiers, eight horsemen, and an infinite host of auxiliaries; the horsemen were posted at the entrance of the street, with orders to remain there and on no account to advance. Recalling the lesson of Alvarado's repulse, Cortes had laid the strictest injunctions on each of the commanders never to advance one pace after capturing a waterway, until the opening was solidly filled in so as to assure their retreat.

The Spanish columns advanced along the three roads and, although there was the usual resistance, one barricade after another was taken; so rapid was the advance and so slight the opposition of the enemy that the wary commander began to suspect some ruse; messages from Alderete reported that he was rapidly nearing the market-place, but these communications, instead of reassuring Cortes, only augmented his misgivings and, in answer, he always sent back a reminder of his orders to fill up the ditches before advancing beyond them. He was repeatedly assured that this was being seen to, but as he still seemed sceptical, it was suggested that if he did not believe what he was told, he might come and see for himself. Acting on this petulant suggestion, his worst fears were speedily confirmed at the very first

ditch, which was ten or twelve paces wide, and two fathoms deep. In their eagerness to be the first to reach the market-place, the men had hastily thrown enough timber and rubbish into the chasm, on which to scramble across to the opposite bank, but had neglected the order to fill it solidly with earth. Convinced that Alderete had allowed himself to be decoyed into some trap, Cortes ordered his men to make all possible haste in filling up the water-course, but hardly had they begun their work, when the fierce war-cries of the Aztecs, in which his practised ear detected the note of triumph, announced the success of the suspected stratagem. Standing on the opposite bank, Cortes helplessly beheld the wild rush of his men in full retreat towards the yawning chasm, so closely pressed by thousands of the exultant enemy that the compact mass of humanity seemed to be rolling onwards to sure destruction. In vain he called and signed to his men to halt; they neither saw nor heard, nor could they have withstood the mass of struggling friends and foes that pressed them to their death. The watercourse was soon choked with floundering men; some, overweighted by their armour, were drowned, others were killed by the arrows and javelins of the enemy, while others were seized alive, dragged into canoes and carried off for sacrifice. A few managed to struggle across to where the

commander and his companions pulled them, half dead, from the water.

Cortes again owed his escape from instant death to the determination which obsessed the Mexicans to take him alive for the sacrifice. His rescuer was the same Cristobal de Olea [1] who had once before come to his aid in a moment of peril at Xochimilco; with one blow of his sword he cut off the arm of the warrior who had seized on the general, falling dead himself the next moment. Bernal Diaz says that Olea slew four chiefs before he himself fell.

This was the last victorious day for the Mexicans and witnessed their culminating effort against their foes. Quauhtemotzin was everywhere present amongst his troops, urging them to a supreme struggle and sounding his trumpet of conch-shell "upon hearing which signal" Bernal Diaz says, "it is impossible to describe the fury with which they closed upon us." [2] Dominating the shouts of "Santiago," the screams of the wounded, the crash of arms, and the fierce war-cries of the Mexicans, was heard the lugubrious roll of the sacred *tlapanhuehuetl* of serpents' skins, which the priests beat with inspired frenzy before the war-god on the *teocalli* of Tlatelolco.

[1] Both Herrera and Torquemada give his name as Francisco.

[2] *Historia Verdadera*, cap, ciii.

Seven horses were killed, seventy Spaniards were captured alive, Cortes was badly wounded in the leg, Sandoval likewise in three places, and both his division and that of Alvarado, suffered serious reverses. When an account came to be taken of the extent of the disaster, dismay filled the sinking hearts of the Spaniards, and the Indian allies began to doubt the power of the *teules* and to ask themselves whether they were not, after all, fighting on the wrong side.

Cortes threw the blame for this catastrophe on Alderete, who had disobeyed his order never to advance without first securing his retreat. Alderete denied that he had ever had such an order, and declared that it was Cortes who had urged the troops forward. Recriminations and censures were thus exchanged, for nobody would accept responsibility for such a calamity; it appears certain that Cortes had not been in favour of the assault, but had allowed his better judgment to be overruled by his companions, who were weary of the daily fighting and thought they could storm the Tlatelolco market-place and so end the siege.

While gloom reigned in the Spanish camp, there was exultation amongst the Mexicans, whose waning hopes of victory were revived by their success. That night, the sanguinary rites of Huitzilopochtli were celebrated with all the pomp of the Aztec ritual, and amidst the files

of priests bearing smoking censers, that mounted the terraces of the pyramid, the glare of torches and the sacred fires revealed to the horrified Spaniards the white, naked bodies of their comrades led, flower-crowned, to the stone of sacrifice. The priests proclaimed that the war-god was appeased by the oblation of so many Spanish victims, and that within eight days he would give his faithful a complete victory over the impious invaders. This oracle was published amongst the allies and shook their wavering faith in the Spaniards; they saw that the city stubbornly held out; they perceived that the strangers were neither invincible nor immortal, and, as their ancient, superstitious fear of their gods reasserted itself, tens of thousands quietly detached themselves from the Spanish camp and marched off homewards. Cortes used every effort to hold them and urged that they should at least wait eight days and see whether the prophecy was fulfilled, before deciding against him. The Tlascalan general, Chichimecatecle,[1] and Prince Ixtlilxochitl of Texcoco remained steadfast to their sworn allegiance. The latter was naturally an object of peculiar hatred to the Mexicans, who reviled him and heaped imprecations on him as a renegade from his race and a traitor to his country. If he felt these taunts, he did not betray his feelings but, day

[1] Also spelled Chichimecatecuhtli.

after day, joined in the scenes of carnage, facing both danger and obloquy unmoved. For five days there was some respite, the Spaniards nursing their wounds and preparing for a resumption of hostilities, while the Mexicans were engaged in making overtures to win back their faithless subjects and allies.

The situation of the Spaniards was well-nigh desperate, but that of the Mexicans was hardly better, for famine stalked their streets, claiming as many victims as the Spanish cannon, and terribly weakening the defenders of the city. The besiegers tenaciously held their positions on the causeways and, aided by the brigantines on the lakes were unceasingly vigilant in maintaining the blockade.

Throughout the siege there were a few Spanish women,—some of them described as " wives " of the soldiers,—in camp, who displayed scarcely less courage than the men, for not only did they occupy themselves in the nursing, which is women's natural function in war-time, but they even mounted guard to relieve the weary soldiers who needed rest, and instances are given of their joining in the actual fighting. Cortes had intended leaving all these women at Tlascala, but his proposed order to that effect aroused such opposition, especially among the women themselves, who declared that Castilian wives, rather than abandon their husbands in danger, would die with them, that it was never

issued. Little has been said of the courage and devotion of these obscure heroines, but Herrera has recorded the names of five, Beatriz de Palacios, Maria de Estrada, Juana Martin, Isabel Rodriguez, and Beatriz Bermudez, as meriting honourable mention in the annals of the conquest.

The eight days appointed by the priests for the destruction of the besiegers expired, and the prophecy remained unfulfilled, seeing which the vacillating allies returned once more to the Spanish camp, where the politic general received them with his customary urbanity and, after reproaching them for their faithless desertion in a panic of foolish superstition, declared that he pardoned their fault and accepted them again as vassals of Spain and his allies.

The timely arrival at Vera Cruz of a Spanish ship, belonging to Ponce de Leon, carrying a cargo of powder and ammunition which the captain of the port bought and forwarded to the besiegers, infused new courage into them. The actual situation could not be prolonged and Cortes continued his plan of systematic destruction so diligently that not a building remained standing in the quarters of the city held by the Spaniards, while the canals became so solidly filled in with the masses of stone and other materials from the demolished houses, that they were never again reopened. While this work was going forward, the Mexicans still

found spirit to taunt the labouring allies, their former vassals, saying: "Go ahead with your work of destruction; no matter how this ends you will have to rebuild the city, for if we conquer, you will do it for us, and if Malintzin is victorious, you will be forced to do it for him." The logic of this jibe struck Cortes at the time, and he reported it to the Emperor, adding, "and it has pleased God that the latter should happen, for it is indeed they [the allies] who are rebuilding the city."

Even after the market-place was stormed and occupied by the Spaniards, and the temple with its idols had been destroyed, the daily offers of peace were rejected by Quauhtemotzin, and there still remained about one eighth part of the city into which the remnant of its inhabitants was crowded.

At this time a soldier named Sotelo, a native of Seville, who claimed to have seen much service in Italy and to know all about the construction of engines of warfare, proposed to Cortes to make a catapult, for hurling huge stones into the midst of the enemy. Bernal Diaz says that this man was eternally talking about the wonderful military machines he could build, with which he promised to destroy in two days the remaining quarter of the city where Quauhtemotzin held out. The commander consented to the trial, and stone, lime, timber, cables, and all the necessary materials

were furnished, together with carpenters and masons, to carry out Sotelo's instructions. The machine was erected on the platform of masonry known as the *mumuztli,* a sort of theatre that stood in the square, and the process of its construction was watched with exultant expectation by the Indian allies, who foresaw the wholesale destruction of their enemies by means of the mysterious machine. They indulged in jubilant prophecies and called on the Mexicans to observe the growth of the engine destined to accomplish their overthrow. The Mexicans were equally impressed by the strange monster and watched its construction with the feelings of one in the condemned cell, who hears the workman building the scaffold on which he is to perish at dawn. The day of the trial (August 6th) arrived and a huge stone was fired, which, instead of flying over to the Indian quarter where it was aimed, shot straight up into the air and fell back into exactly the place from whence it had departed. Cortes was furious with Sotelo and ashamed of the failure in the presence of the gazing multitude; the luckless inventor was in disgrace, and the catapult remained one of the standing jokes in the army. Infusing some gaiety into the company at such a dismal moment, this invention may be said to have served some good purpose, even though not exactly the one expected of it.

In the last desperate days, a final appeal was made by Quauhtemotzin to the national gods. Choosing one of his most valiant soldiers, a youth called Tlapaltecatlopuchtzin,[1] from the quarter of Coatlan, he caused him to be vested with the armour of his dead father, the Emperor Ahuitzotl, giving him also the bow and arrows which adorned the statue of the god of war and were regarded as the most sacred emblems preserved in the temple. Thus accoutred, the young warrior with the formidable name went forth, accompanied by a chief called Cihuacoatlucotzin who acted as his herald, and who exhorted all the people in the name of the god from whom they now, in their extremity, demanded a sign. The effort was vain and the god was silent; this was on the tenth of August. On the night of the eleventh, there burst over the city a terrific storm, in the midst of which the affrighted Mexicans beheld a whirlwind of blood-red fire, throwing out sparks and flashes of light, which seemed to start from the direction of Tepeaca, and, passing over the small quarter of Tenochtitlan still left to them, buried itself in the black waters of the lake. This ominous apparition, which was probably a meteor, was interpreted by the Aztecs as a portent, symbolising the downfall of the empire and the extinction of their power.

[1] The bearer of such a formidable name merits imperishable renown in the annals of the conquest.

The description penned by Cortes of the final assault, the fall of the last entrenchment and the capture of Quauhtemotzin, is not embellished by rhetoric but his terse language gave Charles V. a faithful picture of that dreadful massacre. Neither does Bernal Diaz enlarge upon details and, indeed, no language could do justice to the horror of the fall of the Aztec city, amidst the crash of battle, the smoke and flame of burning houses, the wails of the vanquished, and the shouts of the victors. The living and the dead choked the canals, the wounded and the dying were trampled together with putrefying corpses, in the sea of bloody mire into which the streets had been converted; the stifling August air reeked with the mingled smell of fresh carnage and decaying bodies, while amidst these human shambles the emaciated forms of women and children, destitute of any refuge, tottered pitifully under the merciless weapons of the savage allies, who gave no quarter but hunted all alike through this hell of despair, like demons set upon the ghosts of the eternally damned.

The courage of the defenders never flagged; under the leadership of their young sovereign, who kept his serenity throughout and exercised his best generalship, these naked barbarians, weakened by famine and confronted by inevitable defeat, fought against a steel-clad foe, armed with guns, both on land and on their

ships, which mowed down a very harvest of death at every discharge. Never did they so much as name surrender, thus verifying literally the words with which Quauhtemotzin answered the Spanish overtures for peace, that they would all perish to the last man in the city, and he would die fighting.

Cortes daily renewed his offers of honourable terms for the Emperor and his people, if the city would surrender; day after day, with infinite patience, he made appointments which Quauhtemotzin never kept; time after time he wasted hours in waiting for better counsels to prevail, but nothing he could say or do sufficed to allay the distrust of Quauhtemotzin, or to bring the Mexicans to terms. Their choice was made; they had had enough of the Spaniards, whose semi-divine character was an exploded myth and whose presence in the land was felt to be incompatible with the Aztec sovereignty. Cortes protests throughout the greatest reluctance to destroy the city and declares repeatedly that the necessity of so doing filled him with inexpressible grief. The fate known to be in store for every Spaniard taken alive and the sight of the hideous rites of sacrifice, performed under the very eyes of the soldiers, helpless to intervene, followed by the cannibal feasts, in which the mangled members of their comrades furnished the banquet, were certainly sufficient to arouse the Spaniards to a very frenzy against

such inhuman foes, and yet, there is nowhere found any hint that the spirit of vengeance prompted reprisals on the prisoners who fell into their hands. Such remains of the Spanish victims as could be found were afterwards collected and reverently buried, a chapel dedicated to the Martyrs being erected over the spot, which was afterwards replaced by the Church of San Hipolito.[1]

Cortes thus describes the capture of Quauhtemotzin and the end of the siege:

It pleased God that the captain of a brigantine, called Garci Holguin, overtook a canoe in which there were some distinguished people, and as he had two or three crossbowmen in the prow of the brigantine and was crossing in front of the canoe, they signalled to him not to shoot, because their sovereign was there. The canoe was quickly captured and he took Quatamucin and the Lord of Tacuba and the other chiefs who were with him; and the said captain, Garci Holguin, immediately brought the said sovereign of the city and the other chief prisoners to the terrace where I was, which was near the lake. When I invited them to sit down, not wishing to show any rigour, he approached me and said to me in his language that he had done all that on his part he was bound to do, to defend himself and his people, until he was reduced to that state, and that I now might do with him as I chose; and placing his hand on a dagger which I wore, he bade me stab him with it

[1] Orozco y Berra, lib. iii., cap. viii.

and kill him. I encouraged him, and told him not to be afraid; and this lord having been made prisoner, the war immediately ceased, which God Our Lord was pleased to bring to its end on this day, the Feast of San Hipolito, which was the 13th of August in the year 1521. So that from the day when we laid the siege to the city, which was the 30th of May [1] of the said year, until it was taken, seventy-five days passed, in which Your Majesty may perceive the hardships, dangers, and cruelties, which these, your vassals, suffered, and in which they so exposed themselves that their deeds will bear testimony of them. In all these seventy-five days of the siege, none passed without more or less fighting.[2]

Quauhtemotzin, seeing that escape was hopeless, stood up in the canoe saying: "I am the King of Mexico and of this country, take me to Malintzin. I only ask that my wife and children and the women be spared." Some twenty persons were with him, all of whom Holguin brought back to the city. While the brigantine carrying the royal captive and his fellow-prisoners was returning across the lake, Sandoval came on board and demanded that Quauhtemotzin be delivered to him, as he was commander of that division of the fleet, but Holguin claimed the honour of the capture and

[1] The first active operations against the city really began with the destruction of the aqueduct, a few days earlier.

[2] *Letters of Cortes*, tom ii., p. 127.

refused to yield to his superior. The dispute that ensued, delayed matters, but Cortes, who was informed of the dissension, sent Luis Marin and Francisco Lugo with peremptory orders to cease wrangling and bring the prisoners to him.

Bernal Diaz relates that the commander afterwards called the two claimants and cited to them, by way of example, the incident from Roman history of the capture of Jugurtha, and the dispute between Marius and Scylla as to the honour of that feat, productive of civil wars which devastated the state. He calmed them with the assurance that the circumstance should be fully laid before the Emperor, who would decide which of the two should have the action emblazoned in his arms. Two years later the imperial decision was given and ignored both the contestants, granting instead to Cortes the device of seven captive kings linked with a chain and representing Montezuma, Quauhtemotzin, and the rulers of Texcoco, Tlacopan, Iztapalapan, Cuyohuacan, and Matolzingo.

There is little to add to the passage cited from Cortes describing what passed on that historic occasion, except that he gave orders that the Princess Tecuichpo, the youngest daughter of Montezuma and recently married to her cousin Quauhtemotzin, should receive every consideration. Humboldt, commenting on Quauhtemotzin's choice of instant death, commends the unfortunate young sovereign's con-

duct in the following terms: *"Ce trait est digne du plus beau temps de la Grèce et de Rome. Sous toutes les zones, quelle que soit la couleur des hommes, le langage des âmes fortes est le même lorsqu'elles luttent contre le malheur."* [1] The captive monarch was not deceived by the suave manner and honied words of his captor, and his forebodings were realised when, a few days later, upon his protesting that there was no treasure left in the city, Cortes consented to the use of torture to force him to speak. Bernal Diaz seeks to excuse his commander's part in this unworthy proceeding. It may be said, in extenuation, that he yielded to the angry clamours of his disappointed soldiers, and sought to disprove the insinuation that he had arranged with Quauhtemotzin to conceal the treasure so as later to appropriate it for himself. The custodian of the royal fifth, Alderete, seems to have insisted on the use of torture. The King bore the pain unflinchingly and rebuked the groans of his fellow-sufferer, saying: "Do you think I am taking my pleasure in my bath?" His feet were almost burned off, and he remained a cripple until his death. The anniversary of his capture and the fall of the city were celebrated as a public holiday all during the period of Spanish rule in Mexico, but the Republic has abolished this observance.

[1] *Essai Politique*, p. 192, 4to ed.

The eleventh and last of the Aztec sovereigns was a young man of great personal bravery and energy, in all things the opposite of his superstitious uncle, Mountezuma. He worked indefatigably to win allies, organise an effective defence, and save the tottering kingdom and city; he galvanised the timid into something like courage, he confirmed the waverers, and encouraged the patriots; large stores of arms and provisions were laid in, the useless, aged men and women and the children, were sent off to safe places in the mountains, while the city was filled with warriors. The kings of Texcoco and Tlacopan (Tacuba) joined in these plans, co-operating with their fellow-sovereign. Had like zeal and harmony existed a year earlier, Cortes and his men would never have reached the capital, save as victims to be offered to Huitzilopochtli. Quauhtemotzin arrived too late. Nothing could ward off the impending disaster. The powerful states of Tlascala, Cholula, and others, had openly gone over to the Spaniards, blind to the inevitable destruction they were preparing for themselves; the allies of Mexico were doubtful and faint-hearted,—some of them merely neutrals, awaiting the issue, to declare for the victor. Never did prince die for duty's sake, choosing death with open eyes, and making a last stand for a forlorn cause, more nobly than did the heroic Quauhtemotzin.

Riotous celebrations of the city's fall natu-

rally followed, the opportune arrival of some casks of wine and pork from Cuba furnishing the substance for a banquet, which was followed by dancing. Bernal Diaz remarks that the "plant of Noah was the cause of many fooleries and worse," and that he refrains from mentioning the names of those who disgraced themselves by overindulgence and unseemly antics. Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo was much scandalised at this profane celebration and quickly asserted his spiritual authority over the men. The next morning a solemn mass of thanksgiving was said, and the good friar delivered a sermon on the moral and religious duties of the conquerors. Cortes and others received the sacraments, and these becoming rites ended decorously with a procession, in which the crucifix and an image of the Blessed Virgin, accompanied by the military standards, were carried to the sound of drums, alternating with chanted litanies.

These vinous and pious festivities over, the first great disappointment of the conquest had to be faced. The fabulous treasure was nowhere to be found, nor did tortures succeed in producing it. The place of its alleged burial in the lake, indicated by Quauhtemotzin, was searched by divers who, after many efforts, recovered only about ninety crowns' worth of gold.[1] Bernal Diaz states his opinion that,

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. clvii.

though it was rumoured that vast treasures had been thrown into the lake four days before the end of the siege, the amount had doubtless already been greatly diminished before it came into Quauhtemotzin's hands, and moreover, that the value of it had from the first, seemed double what it really was found to be when it came to be accurately estimated. The discontent amongst the soldiery was great and expressed itself in several ways, one of which, more original than the others, was the writing of pasquinades on the white walls of the officers' quarters at Cuyohuacan, some of which were witty, some insolent, and others not fit for print. Cortes even deigned to reply to some of them in the same vein, and on the same wall, for he rather prided himself on his ready wit and skill at verse making, but Fray Bartolomé, perceiving that the limits of propriety were being overstepped, advised him to stop the practice, which he did by publishing severe punishments for any further writing on the walls.

Positive data, on which to base the computation of the numbers engaged during the siege and the lives lost are wanting. Cortes estimates that sixty-seven thousand Mexicans fell in the last three assaults on the city and that fifty thousand died of starvation and disease, without taking any account of all those who perished during the earlier days of the siege. Bernal

Diaz gives no figures, but both he and the historian Oviedo state their conviction that not more lives were lost at the siege of Jerusalem than in Mexico. The Jewish historian, Josephus, computes the losses of his people at 1,100,000 souls! The comparison with these appalling figures is so obviously exaggerated that these two authorities may safely be disregarded. Writing from the Mexican standpoint, Ixtlilxochitl puts the number of the dead from all causes at 240,000 persons, which greatly exceeds the estimate of Cortes. The same discrepancy appears in the counting of the forces which laid down their arms when Quauhtemotzin was captured. Oviedo leads again with 70,000, Ixtlilxochitl follows with 60,000, and Herrera, who agrees with Torquemada, puts the number at 30,000 fighting men.[1] Whatever the exact number may have been, the Mexican empire was destroyed, its capital annihilated, and a vast number of people butchered amidst scenes of unexcelled ferocity and horror. The annals of no great siege record deeds of greater bravery, and had the justice of their cause equalled the heroism of their defence, the downfall of the Aztecs would be forever sung in song and story wherever brave deeds are remembered.

As has been elsewhere explained, the laurels

[1] Herrera, *Hist, Gen.*, lib. ii., cap. vii.; Torquemada, *Monarchia Ind.*, lib. iv., cap. ci.; Ixtlilxochitl, *Venida de los Españoles*, p. 49; Oviedo, lib. xxxiii.

of the conquest are not exclusively for Spanish brows. The superlative generalship and personal qualities of Cortes, the superior arms and knowledge of military tactics possessed by the Spaniards, and their indomitable courage, constituted their contributions to the successful issue of the long campaign. In the ready hatred of its neighbours and the quick desertion of its dependencies and allies, is read the proof of the inherent weakness of the Aztec empire. All that these peoples possessed,—their knowledge of the country, their labour, their treasure, their fighting-men, and their thirst for vengeance,—were placed at the disposition of Cortes, and thus the conquest was accomplished. Even admitting the most and the worst that has been said of his methods in carrying on this war of invasion, the result commands our applause in the name of humanity.

The Mexican civilisation, even granting that it had reached the high perfection claimed for it by some writers, was chaotic, stationery, and barren; it rested upon despotic power, and its many crimes were expiated in the blood of their perpetrators. Whatever culture and refinement of living there were, centred in the capital and its immediate neighbourhood, the outlying provinces being peopled by aboriginal, not to say savage tribes, which justified their existence by the tribute of men and money they paid, with-

out being sharers in the learning and luxury their labours sustained. *Humanum paucis vivat genus.*[1]

The arrival of the Spaniards in the midst of this chaos of tyranny and disloyalty, shattered the loosely joined organisation, whose inferior character foredoomed it to destruction when brought into contact with a higher and more progressive type of civilisation. The substitution of the Christian religion for the horrors of human sacrifices and the revolting cannibal feasts is, of itself, a sufficient justification for the overthrow of an empire whose bloody and degrading rites were of the very essence of its religious system. Upon the ruins of the old order, a new civilisation has been founded from which has developed a nation, still in the process of formation, in which Spanish and Indian blood are mingled, and which is advancing on the road of human progress to what destiny we know not, but in which the humblest Indian has his place, living in a securer present, and moving towards a higher future, than any his own race could have shaped for him. Many of the best men in modern Mexico trace, with pride, their descent from Aztec kings and nobles. A uniform and rich language with its system of phonetic writing, the introduction of beasts of burden, the use of iron and leather, improved systems of mining, and agriculture which have

[1] "The human race exists for the few."

brought under civilisation vast tracts of land, increasing the variety and quality of the crops, —these and countless other resources, unknown and unknownable to the Aztecs, have revolutionised the present conditions of their existence beyond anything their ancestors could have dreamed.

Even at the price it cost, the conquest must be approved, though it obliterated an interesting and wonderful civilisation so entirely, that the few surviving relics serve but to stimulate enquiries, to which few answers are forthcoming.

With the destruction of the archives of Texcoco, the sponge was passed over the tablets of Aztec history; unwise laws destroyed the native arts and crafts, whose products had astonished the foremost artisans of Europe, while the secrets of the lapidaries, of the gold- and silversmiths, and of the deft workers in feathers, and of other unique crafts, perished for ever, leaving the civilisation of Anáhuac a mystery for all time.

CHAPTER XVI

RECONSTRUCTION

Position of Cortes—The Great Strait—Rebuilding Mexico —Cristobal de Tapia, Francisco de Garay and Sandoval in Panuco—The Silver Cannon—Rebellion of Olid—Expedition to Yucatan—Death of Quauhtemotzin—Return to Mexico.

TWO years and three months had elapsed since the departure of the two procurators, Puertocarrero and Montejo bearing the letters from Vera Cruz, to Charles V., during which lapse of time no direct word or sign of recognition had reached Cortes from Spain. He found himself absolute master of a vast empire that he had subdued without assistance from his sovereign, who continued to ignore the existence of both the conqueror and his conquest. The position was a unique one, nor does history furnish another parallel to it.

In his letter from Segura della Frontera, he had recounted all that had happened to him and his men during their first visit to the Aztec capital and had declared his firm intention of returning thither to recapture the city and reduce the entire empire to His Majesty's obedience. This magnificent announcement fell on uncomprehending ears and had provoked no response. The authority of Cortes still had, for

its sole basis, his election as chief-justice and captain-general of the colony, by the municipality of Vera Cruz which he himself had created. In reality, it rested on the control he exercised over his men and on their voluntary obedience to his will.

The ruins of the capital being unhabitable because of the numbers of unburied dead, the impossibility of obtaining provisions, fresh water, and other necessaries, Cortes had established his headquarters at Coyohuacan, from whence he began the work of rebuilding the city. His conduct in consenting to the torture of Quauhtemotzin at this time, has been compared with that of the Emperor Otho, as described by Tacitus, when he permitted the execution of Galba's ministers and friends. *Othoni nondum auctoritas inerat ad prohibendum scelus; jubere jam poterat.*[1] Though his reluctance to assent to this barbarous proceeding was doubtless sincere, and he even interfered to cut short his captive's sufferings, it is not likely that the use of torture to extract a confession from an unwilling witness revolted Cortes. Not merely at that time, but for two centuries or more afterwards, the use of torture was approved, not only as a punishment, but to force confession of unprovable guilt or to obtain

[1] "Otho had sufficient authority to order the crime but not enough to prevent it." The historical comparison is made by Señor Alaman in the third of his *Disertaciones.*

evidence or information against suspected persons.

Two other procurators were now chosen to carry the royal fifth of the booty to Spain, and again Cortes invited his followers to renounce their shares in the curious objects of gold, silver, and feather-work, of which the workmanship was so remarkable that it eclipsed the value of the precious metal. Divided amongst so many, no one man would receive anything of consequence, while offered intact to the Emperor these treasures would constitute a gift worthy of royalty. The renunciation was easily made; the taste of the men was for crude metal.

This treasure never reached its destination. Alonso de Avila and Antonio de Quiñones, the two officers charged to carry the gifts and the letters to the Emperor, first stopped at the Island of Santa Maria, one of the Azores, where Quiñones was killed in a brawl; Avila was captured off Cape St. Vincent by a French corsair, Florin, who, after robbing the ship of its precious freight, allowed it to continue its voyage to Seville, where it arrived on November 7, 1522. Avila was carried by Florin to La Rochelle, but found means to send his despatches to the Emperor. The Aztec spoils went to enrich the treasury of Francis I. of France, who justified their capture by saying he knew of no provision in Father Adam's will

that made his brother of Spain sole heir to all the earth's treasures.

The news of the downfall of the great Aztec empire spread throughout the neighbouring states, whose rulers, one by one, sent their envoys or came in person to offer their allegiance to the conqueror, and to solicit his protection. Mechoacan was the most important of these lesser kingdoms and possessed a long strip of coast on the Pacific. Cortes sent Spaniards with the envoys of Catzolcin, the ruler of Mechoacan, to explore the country and discover, if possible, a good harbour on the South Sea. The dream of the great strait uniting the two oceans was ever in his mind; its discovery meant opening the way to the Indies, Cathay, and the Spice Islands, by which untold wealth would pour into Spain from those fabulous regions. Through all the later letters of Cortes, is discernible this, his chief preoccupation, as may be seen from the following passages taken from his Fourth Letter of Relation:

In the past chapters, Most Powerful Lord, I have told Your Excellency to what points I had sent people, both by sea and land, believing that with God's guidance, Your Majesty would be well served by them; and, as I always take great care and bethink me of all possible means to carry out my desires for the advancement of the royal service of Your Majesty, it seemed to me that it only

remained to explore the coast from Panuco to the coast of Florida, which was discovered by Juan Ponce de Leon, and from there to follow the coast of Florida towards the north as far as the Bacallaos.[1] For it is believed absolutely, that there is a strait on that coast, leading to the South Sea; and if it should be found, according to a certain drawing which I have of that coast, it must lead very near to where the Archipelago was discovered by Magellanes under Your Highness's commands. And should it please God, our Lord, that the said strait be found there, it would open a good and short passage from the Spiceries to these dominions of Your Majesty, quite two-thirds shorter than that which is at present followed, and one which will be free from risks and dangers to the ships; for they would then always go and come through the dominions of Your Majesty, having facilities for repairs in any port they choose to enter. I am thinking over to myself the great service that would be rendered to Your Majesty, though I am quite wasted and exhausted by all I have done and spent in the expeditions I have fitted out by land and sea, and in providing ammunition and artillery in this city, and in many other expenses and outlays which daily occur; for all our provisions are expensive and of such excessive prices that, although the country is rich, the income I obtain does not correspond to my outlays, costs, and expenses; yet,

[1] This is the first known project for finding the northwest passage. *Bacallaos*, or the sea of codfish, was so called from the vast numbers of these fish which have since become such an important article of commerce on our North Atlantic coasts.

repeating all I have said before and setting all personal interest aside, I have determined to prepare three caravels and a brigantine, of which the cost will reach more than ten thousand pesos of gold, which I swear to Your Majesty I shall have to borrow. I add this new service to those I have already rendered, for I hold it to be the most important, hoping as I do to find the strait; and even if this should not be found, certainly many good and rich countries will be discovered, where Your Cæsarian Majesty may draw profits from the Spicelands and other countries bordering on them. Thus I hold myself at Your Majesty's service, very happy if you will so command me and, in the absence of the strait, I hope to conquer these countries at less expense than any one else; but I pray Our Lord, nevertheless, that my armada may attain the object I pursue, which is to discover the strait, for that would be the happiest of all results. Of this I am well convinced, because, to the royal, good fortune of Your Majesty, nothing can be denied; and diligence and good preparation and zeal shall not be wanting on my part to achieve it.

I likewise expect to send out the ships I have built on the South Sea, which vessels,—Our Lord being willing,—will sail down the coast at the end of July of this year, 1524, in search of the same strait; for if it exists, it cannot escape both those who go by the South Sea and those who go by the North; for the South Sea Expedition will go till they either find it or reach the country discovered by Magellanes, and those of the North, as I have already said, until they reach the Bacallaos. Thus on

one side or the other we cannot fail to discover the secret.

Visions of the great waterway to the East were not suffered to interfere with the reorganisation of the shattered empire, and the work of rebuilding the destroyed city on its ancient site was actively begun. A plan was drawn, in which each concession of ground was marked; one lot was given to any one who applied, on the condition that he should build a house and live there for four consecutive years: each of the conquerors was entitled to two lots. Tlatelolco and Popotlà were the quarters of the new town assigned to the Indians, and the native market occupied its former place in the great square where the last desperate battles of the siege had been fought, while another market for the Spaniards was established before the site where the vice-regal palace was afterwards built.

The Indians either speedily forgot their arts and handicrafts or concealed them; unwise laws were enacted which tended also to suppress them. Archbishop Lorenzana relates an incident illustrating the extraordinary ability of the Indians in executing the most delicate work with primitive tools. A native counterfeiter was arrested, and his whole outfit was found to consist of nothing but thorns from the maguey or cactus plant. The viceroy was so amazed that he offered the man his life if he

would show how he worked, but the Indian preferred to die.

A municipal council was created in 1522 and, for the better control of the Indian population, Cortes revived the office of *ciguacoat,* or royal lieutenant; the authority of the Aztec emperors had been directly exercised through the holder of this office, whom the people were therefore accustomed to obey. Other princes and caciques were restored to the rank and dignities they or their families had formerly enjoyed, and were given jurisdiction over their subjects and dependents. They were required to furnish levies of workmen for the capital, and were held responsible for the good conduct of their people and for the amount of the taxes assessed by the government. A fortress, so designed as to shelter the brigantines and to defend the city, was constructed, and in his fourth letter , dated October 25, 1524, Cortes assured Charles V. that within five years Mexico would be the largest and handsomest town in all his vast dominions. The Bishop of Burgos had prohibited the shipment of artillery and munitions for the army, and Cortes was thus thrown upon his own resources to produce these much needed things in a country where they had never before existed. Iron was unknown to the Mexicans and, though copper was plentiful, there was neither zinc nor tin to fuse with it for making bronze; tin was opportunely

discovered in Tasco, where it was used as money,[1] and within a reasonable space of time the total number of pieces of artillery reached the respectable figure of ninety-five. Powder was still wanting, but the resourceful commander, remembering that sulphur had been seen in the crater of Popocatepetl, sent thither a party of his men of whom one, Montaña, was lowered into the mouth of the fiery mountain and brought back the required quantity. This perilous undertaking was never repeated as, with the removal from office of the obnoxious bishop, supplies were no longer withheld from Cortes.

Cristobal de Tapia, after being detained in Hispaniola by the viceroy and the *audiencia*, arrived at Vera Cruz in December and presented his full-powers from the Cardinal-regent to the municipality of that port. While recognising his official character, pretexts were discovered for deferring the execution of his orders, and Cortes was meanwhile notified of the commissioner's arrival. He selected Fray Pedro Melgarejo de Urrea as his ambassador and sent him to Vera Cruz to treat with Tapia, to whom he wrote an affectionate letter expressing his pleasure at his arrival and his regret that an illness prevented him from com-

[1] Humboldt was struck with this mention of tin money and notes: "*Le passage remarquable dans lequel Cortes parle de l'étain comme monnaie.*" (*Essai Politique.*)

ing to welcome him. The Mercedarian was a prudent negotiator, and he succeeded in convincing Tapia that his wisest course was to return immediately and without attempting to carry out his mission. The friar's diplomacy was backed up by the golden arguments that had been so profitably employed in former and similar circumstances, and the commissioner re-embarked for the Islands, after disposing of his horses, slaves, and stores at the highest market prices. If his reputation suffered in this transaction, he doubtless consoled himself with the profits to his fortune.

The Tapia incident being thus easily disposed of, Cortes resumed his labours for extending and affirming his rule throughout the empire; using Montezuma's tribute rolls as his guide, he despatched his captains into different provinces to found settlements, search for harbours and mines, and to report to him on the resources of the country. Alvarado was sent to Guatemala, Sandoval to Tuxtepeque where he founded a town named Medellin in honour of his commander's birthplace in Spain; Olid to Mechoacan, Villafuerte to Zacutula, and Juan Velasquez to Colima. Cortes himself headed an expedition to the Panuco region for the purpose of opposing the pretentions of Francisco de Garay to exercise jurisdiction in those parts.

At the conclusion of a successful campaign, the town of Santestevan del Puerto was founded

on a narrow strip of land between the lake of Chila and the seacoast, and was provided with a small garrison and the usual municipal government. The peace in Panuco was destined to be soon again disturbed by the arrival of Francisco de Garay in person, at the head of nearly six hundred men.

Cardinal Adrian's regency had meanwhile come to an end with his election to the papal chair under the title of Adrian VI., and Charles V. had returned to Spain and resumed the government of his kingdom. While the enemies of Cortes were as diligent as they were insidious in their efforts to prejudice the young sovereign against him, his friends, amongst whom the most zealous were the Duke of Bejar, the Count of Medellin and his own father, Martin Cortes, were equally assiduous in defending his character and explaining the value of his services. The King appointed a commission to investigate the disputed merits of the conqueror and, acting on the report of this body, Charles approved his acts in Mexico and appointed him Governor, Captain-General, and Chief Justice of New Spain. Diego Velasquez and the Bishop of Burgos were rendered henceforth powerless to interfere in Mexico. The royal letters confirming this appointment were dated from Valladolid, October 15, 1522. The Emperor wrote an autograph letter praising and thanking the members of the force for their services,

and honours, grants of land, and other acceptable favours were liberally bestowed on both the officers and the men.

Francisco de Garay based his claims to Panuco on a royal appointment as *adelantado* [1] of a certain extent of country which he had explored and in which he considered that Panuco was included. Fortunately for Cortes, his appointment as Captain-General and Chief Justice, arrived from Spain by the same ship that brought him news of the machinations of Garay, who was acting in concert with Diego Velasquez, thus enabling him to confront his adversary with the royal cedula that rendered Garay powerless. Being thus worsted, the latter's prestige amongst his own followers was hopelessly damaged, and meanwhile their imaginations had been so fired by the alluring tales of Alvarado and Ocampo, that the majority decided to abandon their leader and remain in Mexico. They had the technical excuse that they had engaged, under certain stipulated conditions, for an expedition to Panuco, but for

[1] The title given to the Governor of a province and which, in the case of Spanish discoverers, meant the leader of an exploring expedition who was empowered to colonise and establish a government of which he should be the head, in any countries he might discover. Las Casas sarcastically explained the etymology of the title, saying, *porque se adelantaron en hacer males y daños tan gravissimos a gentes pacificos,* "because *they took the lead* in perpetrating such great evils and injuries on peaceful people."

nowhere else, and as to Panuco Garay could not go, their contract no longer bound them. Ocampo, to whom Garay appealed to uphold his authority, made a show of beating the country for fugitives, but was careful to collect only the least desirable men, those known as adherents of Velasquez, whom he was glad to see leave the country. Reduced to these straits, Garay went to Mexico, where Cortes played the magnanimous, receiving him as an old friend and arranging a marriage between his daughter, Catalina, and Garay's eldest son.

On Christmas eve, Garay assisted at midnight mass with Cortes and afterwards breakfasted with him; the same day he was seized with violent pains and died a few days later; so opportune did his death seem to some people, that whispers of poison were not wanting. The rising of the Indians of Panuco provoked by Garay's lawless followers under command of his son, whose authority they ignored, was one of the most formidable of its kind, and its suppression by Alvarado was marked by the ferocious cruelty characteristic of him.

The proposed marriage between Doña Catalina and the son of Garay never took place, for she is mentioned in the Bull of Legitimisation in 1529, as a maiden and in her father's will, made in 1547, she is mentioned as being in a convent in Coyohuacan. It is difficult to identify her mother, for Archbishop Lorenzana says

SANDOVAL

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she was the daughter of the first wife, Catalina Xuarez, while other writers affirm that her mother was Marina de Escobar, and still others assert that she was the daughter of Doña Elvira (daughter of Montezuma), in which case she would have been an infant at the time of her bethröthal to young Garay.

To quell the disturbances amongst the Indians of Panuco, provoked by the members of Garay's scattered force, Gonzalo de Sandoval was sent thither and, by the capture and burning of four hundred chiefs, established peace in that region. The better to drive home the lesson, he forced the Indians to assemble and witness the frightful execution of their kinsmen.

Some authors have sought to cast doubts on the number burned, and Herrera even reduces it to thirty, but the language of Cortes himself is unhappily too explicit to admit of doubt.[1] Sandoval was a fellow-townsman of Cortes and was the youngest of his captains; he was his commander's favourite, and his character, as it is discerned in contemporary records, shows him to have been chivalrous, kindly, and the soul of fidelity to Cortes, who trusted both his loyalty and his prudence, absolutely. His conduct in Panuco, however repugnant to our standards of humanity, would have encountered the unreserved approval of the collective military opinion of Europe at that time. The Duke of

[1] *Letters of Cortes*, tom. ii., p. 193.

Alva, many years later, was instructed by Charles IX. of France to murder all the prisoners he had taken at Genlis and Mons and, lest the French King's order might not constrain him to that measure, his own sovereign, Philip II., wrote that if for any reason he had failed to obey, he should delay no longer, adding the significant phrase, that his conduct would do both himself and all Christendom grave injury. St. Bartholomew, the Nones of Haarlem, and the Glencoe massacre, considered as repressive or punitive measures, equalled in ferocity the wholesale execution of the chiefs in Panuco. The guilt of such deeds of cruelty may be more justly assigned to the pliant jurists who forged such weapons, ready for their sovereign's hand, and most of all to the priestly casuists who salved the royal conscience and even blessed the blow. The rude soldiers who executed the deed were the least culpable amongst the guilty.

News of the seizure by French pirates of the treasure sent to Charles V. having reached Mexico, Cortes had collected another hoard of gold, silver, feather-work, rich stuffs, and curious ornaments. Being just then engaged in casting guns, he indulged in an extravagant fancy destined to impress the Emperor and his court with the magnificent resources of New Spain. This was the casting of a silver cannon, or falconet, for his sovereign's acceptance. It weighed about twenty-three hundred-weight; the

ornamentation, executed by the best native silversmiths, displayed a phenix, underneath which was the following inscription:

> Aquesta nacio sin par,
> Yo en serviros sin segundo;
> Vos, sin igual en el mundo.

The Jesuit historian, Cavo, says this legend provoked much invidious comment at the Spanish court.

The appointment of their commander as captain-general and chief-justice was hailed with enthusiasm by the men who had accomplished the conquest, for, with the arrival of the royal commission, all past irregularities were wiped out, their semi-piratical and mutinous conduct towards the colonial officials was condoned, and both Cortes and his men might congratulate themselves on finally occupying a legally sound and royally recognised status under the Spanish crown. The Emperor's promises of recompense, though vague, were sufficient to feed the hopes of the veterans for some time to come, while his words of praise reconciled them to a further postponement of more substantial rewards.

During this period of the reconstruction of the Mexican State, Cortes proved himself a painstaking and capable ruler, and nothing that could attract colonists, promote their welfare, and develop the resources of the country escaped his attention. In March. 1524, he pub-

lished a set of Ordinances for the government of the country, whose provisions furnish incontestable proof of his wisdom as a lawmaker. Some of his enactments were as strict as any Puritan could have prescribed. Married colonists were obliged to bring their wives to their plantations within eighteen months, under pain of forfeiting the grant; those who were unmarried were given the same period within which to find wives.[1] Sumptuary laws regulated the wearing of velvets, silks, and brocades, and their use for saddles, shoes, and sword-belts, as well as the display of jewels, gold ornaments, and embroideries.[2]

Sunday observance was very rigid and all shops were closed; trades of every kind were suspended during the hours of religious services, while attendance at mass was compulsory on Sundays and great feast days. Gambling was the hardest vice to control, and the enemies of Cortes were not slow to criticise his own fondness for cards and dice, alleging that he privately practised and encouraged what he publicly condemned.

Unfortunately the Spaniards introduced the most reprehensible of all "sports" if such it can be honestly called, the bull-fight, as early as 1526.[3] Dancing was not discouraged, and

[1] Gomara, *Hist. Mex. Ordenanzas apud Pacheco and Cardenas.*

[2] Puya, *Cedulario.*

[3] Vetancourt, *Teatro Mexicano.*

religious festivals were celebrated with gorgeous processions, so life was not quite so colourless as it was afterwards made in the New England colonies.

To provide for the conversion of the natives and the maintenance of Christian instruction and practices amongst the Spaniards, was amongst the chief cares of Cortes, and to this end, he begged the Emperor to send men of the religious Orders to Mexico. He objected to bishops, as being too fond of good living and too lazy to devote themselves to such labours, while their lax morals would only provoke scandals and discredit the Christian religion. He asked that the Emperor obtain episcopal faculties for the priors of the Orders and thus obviate the necessity of having bishops. Charles V. acted on this suggestion and the Pope, at his instance, gave to Padre Toribio de Benevente (Motolinia) power to give confirmation but not to consecrate holy oils. The first superior of the Franciscans was Friar Martin de Valencia, and of the Dominicans, Friar Vetanzos, who built the first convent near Texcoco, at a place called Tepetlaxtoc.[1]

Cortes was somewhat sweeping in his condemnation of bishops, and his strictures may only be admitted with reservations. Archbishop Lorenzana agrees with other authorities that there were bishops and canons in Spain,

[1] Lorenzana, Fourth Letter, note.

who led lives that were far from exemplary, but says that this state of things was fortunately brought to a close by the disciplinary enactments of the Council of Trent. With such examples of apostolic virtues and missionary zeal as are found in the lives of Spanish bishops like Las Casas, Zumarraga, and Diego Landa before us, it seems evident that Cortes too easily despaired of finding men of episcopal rank adapted for spiritual labours in Mexico. He also objected to doctors and more especially to lawyers, and earnestly begged the Emperor to forbid members of these learned professions to come to Mexico, saying that the doctors would only bring new diseases with them, while failing to cure the old ones, and that the lawyers would flourish by augmenting the contentions and dissensions which, though already too frequent, the colonists managed to settle amicably amongst themselves.

In October of 1524, it seemed to Cortes, as he expressed it in his Fifth Letter to Charles V., that he "had been a long time inactive and without undertaking anything in Your Majesty's service." Cristobal de Olid had been sent in 1523 to establish a settlement in Honduras and his expedition left Vera Cruz on January 11, 1524, stopping first at Cuba, where the commander fell under the influence of Diego Velasquez, who incited him to throw off the authority of Cortes and act independently. When the

first news of his insubordination was brought to Cortes by Gonzalo de Salazar, he despatched his kinsman, Francisco de Las Casas, to recall Olid to his obedience. Olid had sent a part of his forces against Gonzalo de Avila, who was also exploring in that country, and upon the arrival of Las Casas, he temporised, seeing that he could not successfully resist, and while thus gaining time, he sent hurriedly to recall his men. A violent storm having driven the ships of Las Casas on to the coast, he and his men were easily captured, and as Gonzalo de Avila was likewise taken at the same time, Olid's star was in the ascendant. His triumph was short-lived, however, for he had rendered himself unpopular in the colony, of which fact his prisoners, who had complete liberty to go about, with the sole restriction that they were not to carry arms, took advantage to plan a successful rebellion against him. He was captured and, after a summary trial, was beheaded in the public square of Naco. The *audiencia* of San Domingo had sought to forestall these conflicts amongst Spaniards, by sending their agent, the bachelor Moreno, with full powers to order Las Casas back to Vera Cruz, hoping to put an end to the contests between Olid and Avila, and to stop Pedro de Alvarado who, by order of Cortes, was marching overland against Olid. Moreno's proceedings and those of his companion, Ruano, are recounted in the

memorial read by the colonists to Cortes, which the latter transcribed in his Fifth Letter for the Emperor's information.

It was the news of the shipwreck of Las Casas, and of the troubled state of the Honduras colony that prompted Cortes to undertake his remarkable expedition through Yucatan, which forms the subject of his Fifth Letter to Charles V. In spite of the royal favour shown him, and the rank and powers conferred upon him in Mexico, Cortes began at this time to suffer from attacks on all sides. The Spanish officials formed, in reality, a band of spies on his every act. Gonzalo de Salazar, Pero Armildez Chirino, Alonso de Estrada, and Rodrigo de Albornoz were sent as revenue officers to Mexico in 1524 and empowered to establish a court of accounts. Estrada was treasurer, Albornoz was accountant, Salazar, factor, and Chirino, inspector. Their expectations of finding immense treasures ready at hand, were disappointed, and the only explanation which seemed adequate was that Cortes had concealed or made way with them. In their joint despatch to the Emperor, they accused him of possessing great riches, and of having hidden the treasure of Montezuma instead of accounting for it to the crown. They described him as tyrannical, disloyal, and engaged in plotting to establish his authority independently in the country. This despatch was closely followed by two other

letters, one signed by all of them and the other by Salazar alone. Salazar stated that Cortes had collected three hundred and four million castellanos, without counting Montezuma's treasure which was buried in various secret places; that he had retained for himself some thirty-seven or forty provinces, some of them as large as all Andalusia; that he was commonly believed to have poisoned Francisco de Garay; and that the ships he pretended were preparing for the expedition to the Spice Islands were really for the purpose of carrying himself and his treasure in safety to France.

It was doubtless a relief to the harassed spirit of Cortes to escape from the trials of the governorship and the attacks of his enemies, and to betake himself to the wilderness in search of the secrets of the lands and seas to the unknown South. In setting forth on this expedition, which was to cover a distance of five hundred leagues through savage lands, he affected the pomp of an Oriental satrap, taking with him, besides the necessary soldiers, guides, Indian allies, and camp-followers, a complete household of stewards, valets, pages, grooms, and other attendants, all under the command of a major-domo of the household. Gold and silver plate for his table was provided, also musicians, jugglers, and acrobats to amuse the company. Spanish muleteers and equerries

were taken along to have charge of the carriages and horses and, in addition to the usual provender, a supply of meat was ensured by an immense drove of pigs driven along, which could not have accelerated the march. He had a map painted on cloth by native artists, which showed, after their fashion, the rivers and mountain chains to be crossed. This and his compass were all he could rely upon to guide him during his perilous undertaking. Doña Marina, went as chief interpreter, but Geronimo de Aguilar did not accompany this expedition, though he was not dead, as Bernal Diaz states, for in 1525 he applied for a piece of land on which to build a house in the street now called Balvanera.[1] The record of these events, however noteworthy, may seem tame reading after the exciting chronicle of the siege and fall of Mexico,—a war drama of the most intense kind,—but in forming a correct estimate of the character of Cortes we must not restrict ourselves to a study of the qualities he displayed in the course of the conquest, and which prove him a most resourceful genius. At five and thirty years of age he had successfully completed as daring and momentous an undertaking as history records, and it is as conqueror of Mexico that he takes his place among the world's great heroes. M. Désiré Charnay, in the preface to his French translation of the Five Letters says:

[1] Alaman, *Dissertazione* iv.

"La conquête de Cortes . . . coûta au Mexique de dix millions d'êtres humains emportés par la guerre, les maladies et les mauvais traitements: de sorte que cet homme de génie peut entrer sans conteste dans la redoutable phalange des fléaux de l'humanité." [1]

This journey through Yucatan, that would have won renown for another, added nothing to his reputation, rather may it be said that the darkest stain his name bears was inflicted on it amidst the labyrinthine forests of that distant land. The hardships endured by himself and his men challenge credibility; the country was intersected with vast rivers and overgrown with such extensive forests that for days they marched in a subterranean gloom, unable to see the sky and hardly able to find their footing. Dismal swamps, stretching away indefinitely, intercepted their march, over the greatest of which the persevering commander built a bridge composed of one thousand tree trunks, each sixty feet long and as large round as a man's body. The Spaniards being so reduced by hunger, fatigue, and despair of ever getting out of the wilderness alive, were on the verge of open mutiny and refused to undertake the titanic labour, but their leader was not merely undaunted by the difficulties of the task and undismayed by their refusal to work, he

[1] Just what M. Charnay means these figures to include, is not clear.

accomplished his purpose and, at the same time, administered a stinging rebuke to their Castilian pride, for he called together the Indians of his expedition and confided the work exclusively to them, excluding his own men, who were thus little by little shamed into lending a hand towards completing the bridge.

Beyond this great morass, new difficulties of a different kind awaited them, for the whole country seemed but one shaky quagmire in which the horses sank to their girths, or as Cortes wrote "to their very ears." At the beginning of Lent in 1525 a halt was made in the province of Acalan, during which Quauhtemotzin and his fellow captives were executed. Cortes related the incident in his Fifth Letter to the Emperor as follows:

An event happened in this province which it is well Your Majesty should know. An honourable citizen of Temixtitan, by name Mexicalcingo, but now called Cristobal, came to me one night privately, bringing certain drawings on a piece of the paper used in that country and explained to me what it meant. He told me that Guatemucin whom, since the capture of this city, I have held a prisoner on account of his turbulent nature, carrying him as well as other chiefs and lords whom I thought the cause of revolt in this country, with me was conspiring against me. Besides Guatemucin, the King of Texcoco and Tetepanguecal, King of Tacuba and a certain Tacatelz who had lived formerly in

Mexico in the quarter of Tatelulco, all of whom many times conversed among themselves, had told this Mexicalcingo how they had been dispossessed of their land and authority and were ruled over by the Spaniards, and that it would be well to seek some remedy so that they might recover their authority and possessions; and, in speaking thus during this expedition, they had thought the best way would be to kill me and my people and afterwards to call on the natives of these provinces to rise and kill Cristobal de Olid and all his people; after that, they would send their messengers to Temixtitan to incite the people to kill all the Spaniards, which thing they thought could easily be done, as many were newly arrived and untrained to warfare. After that, they would raise the whole country and kill all the Spaniards wherever they might be found, putting strong garrisons of natives in all the seaports so that none might escape nor any vessel coming from Castile take back the news. By these means they would rule again as before, and they had already distributed the different provinces amongst themselves, giving one to this same Mexicalcingo. I gave many thanks to Our Lord for having revealed this treachery to me and at daybreak I imprisoned all those lords, each one by himself, and then inquired of them, one by one, about the plot; and to each I said that the others had revealed it to me (for they could not speak with one another). Thus they were all constrained to confess that it was true that Guatemucin and Tetepanguecal had invented the plot and that, though the others had heard it, they had never consented to take part. These two, therefore, were hanged

and I set the others free because it appeared they were to blame for nothing more than having listened, although this alone was sufficient for them to deserve death; their case, however, remained open so that at any time they relapse they may be punished accordingly, though it is not probable that they will again conspire for they think that I discovered this by some magic, and that nothing can be hidden from me; for they have noticed that to direct the making of the road I often consult the map and compass, especially when the road approaches the sea, and they have often said to the Spaniards that they believed I learned it by that compass; also they have sometimes said, wishing to assure me of their good disposition, that I might know their honest intentions by looking into the glass and on the map, and that there I would see their sincerity since I knew everything by this means. I allowed them to think that this was true.

The Indian version of Quauhtemotzin's execution copied by Torquemada from a Mexican manuscript, is quite different from the one Cortes gives to the Emperor. Cohuanacox, King of Texcoco, spoke privately at Izancanac with his fellow-prisoners, saying that were their people not what they were, their kings would not be so easily reduced to slavery and marched about behind the Spanish commander, and that it would in reality be easy enough to repay Cortes for burning Quauhtemotzin's feet. At this point the others stopped him, but a Mexican who is called Mexicalcin and was baptised

as Cristobal had overheard and reported the words to Cortes, who, without more ado, hanged the three princes that night on a ceiba tree. Torquemada expresses the opinion that Cortes was weary of guarding the royal captives yet dared not free them, and was glad to use the first pretext to kill them.

Bernal Diaz states that both Quauhtemotzin and Tetlepanquezatl protested their entire innocence and that all the Spaniards disapproved the execution. Cortes dared much, and there was little articulate public opinion in Mexico whose voice he could not control, but it is doubtful if he would have dared to hang the last three native kings on such vague charges, reported by a camp servant, with all Mexico looking on. The king whom Cortes served, offered five thousand crowns for the assassination of an enemy, and there was not a contemporary sovereign in Europe who, in case of necessity, would have hesitated to follow his example.

It were not strange that the royal captives should have talked of their misfortunes and sufferings, when they thought they were alone, or have discussed how it all might have been prevented, or even repaired, but it is a far cry from such communings over their camp-fire to the organisation of a plot to kill their captor and raise a general insurrection against the Spaniards. There seems no discoverable justification for this barbarous and treacherous act.

It needed no gift of prophecy for Quauhtemotzin to foresee his fate when he fell into the hands of Cortes, and the choice he then expressed for immediate death proved that he cherished no illusions as to what the future held for him. Prescott, in describing the inglorious end of the last Aztec emperor says: "Might we not rather call him the last of the Aztecs, since from this time, broken in spirit and without a head, the remnant of the nation resigned itself almost without a struggle to the stern yoke of its oppressors."

It is said that Cortes was disquieted in his conscience after this "execution" and for a long time could not sleep. The murdered captives were: Quauhtemotzin, Emperor of Mexico, Cohuanacox, King of Texcoco; Tetlepanquetzal, King of Tlacopan; Oquizi, King of Atzcapotzalco; Vehichilzi, brother of Quauhtemotzin and King of Mechoacan, and the two Indian generals, Xihmocoatl and Tlacatle. Humboldt [1] describes an Indian picture-writing representing the hanging of these prisoners by their feet to prolong their sufferings, which he saw in Mexico.

Everywhere during his progress through the wilds, Cortes proclaimed his religious and political dogmas; the natives were instructed in the faith, crosses and altars replaced the demolished idols in their *teocalli,* and the universal sovereignty of the King of Spain over

[1] *Essai Polit.,* lib. iii., cap. viii.

all the American nations was asserted. He reported hopefully to the Emperor on the effects of his propaganda, but his optimism rested on shadowy foundations. At Peten-Izta, an island city in the lake of Peten, where the cacique seemed an unusually enthusiastic convert, a horse belonging to Cortes was found to be so badly lamed that it had to be left behind. Charging the willing cacique to look to its welfare, the expedition moved on. The fate of this animal proved indeed a strange one. Villagutierra [1] relates that some Franciscan monks, who visited Peten-Itza in 1614, with Don Martin Ursua, landed with the intention of building a church on the island and found there a large temple, in which stood the image of a horse very well carved in stone. They discovered that the lame horse had later become an object of great veneration to the natives who fed him on flowers, birds, and similar delicacies, with the natural result that the poor animal starved to death, after which he was ranked amongst the native deities and worshipped under the title of Tziminchak, god of thunder and lightning. It would appear from this that the Christian doctrines had not been so clearly understood by the chief and his people as Cortes imagined.

On his arrival at the Spanish settlement on the Golfo Dulce, Cortes learned of the fate of

[1] *Hist. de la Conquista del Itza.*

Olid, and of all the adventures and afflictions that had befallen the colonists; he was welcomed by the miserable, fever-stricken remnant of the people, with what enthusiasm they could still muster. After listening to the recital of their vicissitudes and grievances, he turned his attention to planning an exploring expedition through the neighbouring province of Nicaragua, which he felt must be conquered before he returned to Mexico. At this juncture, however, there arrived a letter from the licentiate Zuazo, recounting the misrule in Mexico that had followed close upon the departure of Cortes from the city. The men composing the Provisional Government had fallen to wrangling,—even drawing their swords in the council chamber,—and, after persecuting, imprisoning, or exiling most of his friends, these men had seized and sold his property and were perpetrating such outrages that the Franciscans had left the city and the entire populace lived in daily apprehension of a mutiny of the Indians.

The report of the absent commander's death was so persistently spread and with such details of the time and place of his decease, that his own friends and servants began to believe it. To confirm the impression requiem masses were celebrated for the repose of his soul. Diego de Ordaz started with four brigantines on the Xicalango River, which empties into the

gulf, to ascertain, if possible, the truth of the rumours; he met several Indian traders, who assured him that Cortes had been dead for seven or eight moons, having been captured after a battle, in which he was wounded in the throat, by the cacique of Cuzamilco, a town on the lake seven days' distant from Xicalango; and that the cacique had sacrificed him to the principal deity of the place called Uchilobos.[1] Zuazo's report convinced Cortes that only his presence would suffice to restore order out of the chaos prevailing in the capital. His first two efforts to embark for Vera Cruz were defeated by severe gales, and it was not until April 25, 1526, that he was able to set sail from Honduras. His vessel was driven to the island of Cuba where he remained until May 16th, when he re-embarked and, after a voyage of eight days, landed near San Juan de Ulua. His arrival was unexpected and he landed unnoticed, proceeding directly to Medellin where he repaired to the church and was engaged in his devotions when the news of his presence became public. He was so broken by the fatigues of his expedition and so wasted by fever and wounds that he was scarcely recognisable, and many could hardly persuade themselves that the emaciated man they saw was the gallant Malintzin. He was received with the wildest rejoicing, the

[1] Letter of Albornoz to Charles V., December 26, 1526, apud Muñoz, tom. lxxvii., fol. clxix.

Indians outdoing the Spaniards in their enthusiasm; for despite the sufferings he had brought upon them, he understood how to be kind to them and, compared with the cold brutality and insatiable rapacity of the mean-spirited officials who had oppressed the natives during his absence, the treatment of them by Cortes seemed to this poor people that of a paternal benefactor. The Jesuit historian, Cavo, in recounting the events of this period says that

> these were surely among the happiest days of Cortes's life, for he could hardly proceed on his march on account of the constant demonstrations of the crowds of Indians who came, some of them even a distance of sixty leagues to see him and bring him presents, so that, had he been their own king Montezuma, they could not have behaved differently. Cortes was more than once moved to tears by such unexpected demonstrations of joy from this simple people.

On his arrival in the capital, Cortes retired for six days to the Franciscan monastery "to give an account of my sins to God" as he wrote to the Emperor. During his absence of nearly two years, his enemies, both hidden and declared, had sent complaints of him to Spain by every ship; he was accused of murdering his wife, Catalina, who had died within a few months after her arrival in Mexico where, though her presence was uninvited and probably

unwelcome, she was received with the honour due to her husband's exalted position.[1] He was accused of defrauding both the royal treasury and his companions in arms, by taking an undue share of the spoils of war for himself, and, finally, the accusation of plotting to set up an independent government with himself as king was preferred against him. These ceaseless intrigues decided the Emperor to send a high commissioner with ample powers, not only to investigate all the charges against the captain-general, but also to report upon the general condition of affairs in New Spain. This was the

[1] This accusation, though at first adopted by Juan Xuarez, was afterwards dropped, nor did the Xuarez family in subsequent claims against the estate of Cortes ever make use of it. Aleman, in the fifth of his *Disertaciones*, observes that the circumstances under which it was made discredited it, and that it was neither considered by the second *audiencia*, nor did it prevent Cortes from forming an alliance with one of the noblest families of Castile. In the *Pesquisa Secreta*, published in the *Documentos Ineditos de Indias*, may be found whatever evidence could be collected to establish this charge. Carefully weighed and with due consideration of the methods employed to elicit testimony and the character and purposes of his accusers, even the strongest points in the evidence appear, to say the least, unconvincing.

The enemies of Cortes were at that time restrained by no scruples in their determination to discredit him in Spain and break his power in Mexico. In his letter to Charles V., dated October 15, 1524, he somewhat forgot his habitual self-control and betrayed his irritation in immoderate language that could hardly fail to awaken the monarch's distrust, but he prudently resisted every provocation to acts of violence that might give colour to the more serious accusations against him.

means usually employed in such cases and did not necessarily constitute any indignity to Cortes, to whom the Emperor took occasion to write, notifying him of his decision and assuring him that it was in no sense prompted by suspicions of his loyalty or honesty, but rather to furnish him with the opportunity of silencing his calumniators once for all by proving his innocence. Don Luis Ponce de Leon, a young man of high character and unusual attainments, was charged with this delicate mission and his appointment was universally applauded as an admirable one. He was received upon his arrival in Mexico by Cortes and all the authorities with every distinction due to him, but his untimely death of a fever, within a few weeks after his arrival, defeated the good results expected from his labours and also furnished the enemies of Cortes with another accusation against him,—that of poisoning the royal commissioner.

His powers devolved upon Marcos de Aguilar, who was not only too old for such an arduous post but was ill of a disease which, it was said, obliged him to take nourishment by suckling, for which purpose wet-nurses and she-goats were daily furnished him. The speedy death of this harmless old man started another story of poisoning and was followed by the supreme disaster of Estrada's succession to the ill-starred commissionership, under whom the baiting of Cortes went on apace, while the entire population, Spanish as well as native, groaned

under oppressions and vexations innumerable. The slave-trade was carried on shamelessly with nameless cruelties, chiefly by the brutal Nuñez de Guzman, a partisan of Diego Velasquez, who had been placed by the latter's influence as governor of Panuco, for the express purpose of tormenting Cortes and fomenting cabals against his authority. This petty tyrant committed barbarities never before heard of in Mexico.

Wearied out with persecutions and insults, and hopeless of obtaining justice from such officials as Estrada and his subordinates, Cortes decided to go to Spain and lay his own case before the Emperor. His decision created some consternation amongst his opponents, and Estrada realised that it was a great blunder to drive the captain-general to make a personal appeal to the sovereign. If opposition or concessions could have stopped him, Cortes would have relinquished his plan, for overtures were made through the Bishop of Tlascala, and promises of satisfaction were not spared; but his preparations were well under way and, though perhaps somewhat mollified by the changed tone of Estrada, he remained firm in his purpose. The news of his father's death reached him in Vera Cruz, where he had gone to embark on his homeward voyage, and, burdened with this sorrow, he sailed for the historic port of Palos, where he arrived after an unusually brief and prosperous passage, in the month of May, 1528.

CHAPTER XVII

CLOSING SCENES—TRIUMPHS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS—THE DEATH OF CORTES

The Home-Coming—Dignities and Privileges—Second Marriage—Nuñez de Guzman—Arrival in Vera Cruz—Marquisate of Oaxaca—The South Sea—Return to Spain—Voltaire's Legend—Death of Cortes—Burial of Cortes—Funeral in Mexico—Last Resting Place—The Palermo Legend

CORTES had arranged that his arrival at the Spanish Court should be of the nature of a veritable pageant. Different estimates of the treasure he took with him are given by different authorities, but these are mere matters of figures; the amount was fabulous, and in addition to this he carried a perfect museum of Mexican objects, such as the unique feather-work in which the Indians excelled, arms, embroideries, implements of obsidian, rare plants; indigenous products such as chocolate, tobacco, vanilla, and liquid amber; gorgeous parrots, herons, jaguars, and other beautiful birds and animals unknown in Spain, were carried or led by Indians, wearing the dress of their tribes. That nothing might be wanting, he took with him many skilful jugglers, acrobats, dwarfs, albinos, and human monstrosities, which

were much the fashion at that time, and these curiosities made such a sensation that Charles V. could think of no fitter destination for them than to send them on to His Holiness Clement VII., before whom they performed and showed themselves to the delight and wonder of the pontifical court. In the personal suite of the Conqueror, besides the numerous officials of his household, there went about forty Indian princes in their most gorgeous robes and jewels, amongst whom were the sons of Montezuma and of the Tlascalan chief, Maxixcatzin.

The arrival of this magnificent cortège at Palos was unannounced, and hence no fitting reception had been prepared there, but accident supplied a more remarkable grouping of interesting men of the century than design could have provided. Within the modest walls of Santa Maria la Rabida, where Columbus had found hospitality, there met with Cortes, who was accompanied by Gonzalo de Sandoval and Andres de Tapia, Francisco Pizarro, whose brilliant career in South America, rivalling his own in the North, was just dawning; and by a fateful coincidence, there was also in the suite of Cortes, the Spanish soldier, Juan de Rada, by whose hand Pizarro was destined to perish in Peru. The date of his arrival at Palos is given by Bernal Diaz as December, 1527, but Herrera's authority for the later date

has been followed by Prescott, Alaman, and other historians.

The triumphal home-coming was marred at the very outset by the death of Gonzalo de Sandoval at Palos, a few days after their landing. For none of his captains did Cortes cherish the affection he felt for this gallant young soldier, who was his fellow-townsman and loyal friend. Sandoval was buried at La Rabida, and Cortes first went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Guadeloupe, where he spent some days in mourning his loss and having masses celebrated for the departed soul. This pious duty accomplished, he set out for Toledo, where the Court then was, and, as the news of his arrival had spread and had also been announced by his own letter to the Emperor, he was everywhere accorded a veritable triumph by the people, who flocked from all sides to see the hero of the great conquest and to gaze upon the marvellous trophies which he brought; so that since the first return of Columbus no such demonstrations had been seen in Spain.

A brilliant group of nobles comprising the Duke of Bejar, the Counts of Aguilar and Medellin, the Grand Prior of St. John, and many of the first citizens of Toledo, rode out from the city to meet the conqueror on the plain, and the next day the Emperor received him with every mark of favour, raising him up when he would have knelt in the royal presence,

PORTRAIT OF CORTES
FROM A COPPER PRINT OF 1715

and seating him by his side. The moment was an auspicious one, for influences had been at work in his favour. Since the appointment of the new commission of *residencia,* presided over by the infamous Nuñez de Guzman, which had already left Spain, the Emperor's information as to the real state of things in Mexico, and the respective merits of the contending parties, had been much extended and perfected. He consulted Cortes during his stay at Court upon everything pertaining to the new realm; its resources, the natives, their customs, the Spanish colonists, and especially concerning the best means for establishing a stable government, and developing industries and agriculture.

Besides full power to continue his explorations, and the confirmation of his rank of Captain-General, the title of Marques del Valle de Oaxaca was conferred upon Cortes and his descendants, by patents dated July 6, 1529, to which was joined a vast grant of lands, comprising twenty-eight towns and villages; one twelfth of all his future discoveries was to be his own. He received the knighthood and habit of Santiago, and when he was confined to his lodgings by illness, the Emperor visited him in person; this latter being such a singular honour that, as Prescott caustically observes, the Spanish writers of the time seemed to regard it as ample recompense for all he had done and suffered. It does not seem certain that he ac-

cepted the knighthood of Santiago, though Herrera says that he had already possessed it since 1525. His reason for his alleged refusal was that no *commenda* was attached to the dignity, and Alaman [1] says that, while his name is on the rolls of the order, the insignia do not appear either in his arms or his portraits, nor is any mention found of his possession of this grade in the list of his honours.

It is good to note that Cortes did not forget his friends while he was at Court, but profited by the Emperor's hour of graciousness to obtain countless favours for them, especially for the Indians. The Tlascalans, in recognition of their loyalty, were exempted for ever from taxes and tribute; the Cempoallans were granted a like exemption for a period of two years; a college for the sons of Mexican nobles, and another for girls, were endowed. Money was awarded to the Franciscan Order for building churches and schools; tithes were established to maintain the Bishop Zumarraga; various privileges were secured for the original "conquerors" who had settled in the country. Generous doweries were also appointed to the four daughters of Montezuma, who were being educated in a convent in Texcoco, as well as to the daughters of Mexican nobles who married Spaniards.

During his stay in Spain, Cortes married his second wife Doña Juana de Zuñiga, a daughter

[1] *Dissertazione* v.

of the Count of Aguilar and niece of the Duke of Bejar. His gifts to his bride were of such magnificence as to arouse even the Queen's envy, especially the five large stones described as emeralds, which excelled any jewels ever seen and were worth a nation's ransom. There were no emeralds in Mexico, and these stones were probably a kind of jade or serpentine of great brilliancy and value, which were easily confounded with emeralds. One of these stones was cut as a bell, whose tongue was formed of a large pear-shaped pearl, and which bore the inscription *benedito sea el que te crió* [1]; another was shaped like a fish with golden eyes; the third was in the form of a rose; the fourth in that of a trumpet; and the fifth was fashioned into a cup, surmounted by a superb pearl and standing on a base of gold, on which was the inscription, *inter natos mulierum non surexit major.*[2] For this last jewel alone, some Genoese merchants who saw it at Palos offered forty thousand ducats. The fame of these jewels was such that the Queen expressed a wish to have them, and, had not Cortes forestalled the royal desire by presenting them to Doña Juana de Zuñiga as a marriage gift, they would doubtless have passed into the crown jewels of Spain.

In the meantime, while Cortes was being lionised and honoured in Spain, his enemies in

[1] "Blessed be thy maker."

[2] "Amongst men born of women no greater has arisen."

Mexico were not idle, for Nuñez de Guzman from the moment of arriving there had begun secretly to collect information against him and, by unscrupulous and inquisitorial methods, easily succeeded in forming a voluminous budget of accusations, among which figured the alleged poisoning of Luis Ponce de Leon, the conspiracy to establish himself as independent sovereign in Mexico, defrauding the royal fisc, and incitement of the Indians to rebel against the royal authority while he was absent in Spain. Encouraging the enemies of Cortes to depose against him on the one hand, Guzman found excuses for persecuting his friends on the other, even to the extent of imprisoning, torturing, and hanging them, on one pretext or another. Things reached such a pass through the violence of the President's conduct, that the Bishop, Fray Juan Zumarraga, a man whose exemplary life gave him great influence, and the Franciscan monks, sent a vigorous protest to Spain against Guzman and his auditors, praying that the former be deposed. .This petition provoked an order from the Empress-Regent and the Royal Council, to take their *residencia* and that they be imprisoned if found guilty of the abuses imputed to them. The Bishop himself was appointed, *ad interim,* President of the new *audiencia,* which was composed of Quiroga, Salmeron, and Ceynos, pending the arrival of the permanent President, Don Sebastian Ra-

mirez de Fuenleal, then Bishop of San Domingo and afterwards of Cuenca.

Nuñez de Guzman sought to evade the issue by organising against the Chichimecas an expedition which he conducted with characteristic brutality. He left the city of Mexico at the head of five hundred Spaniards, and over two thousand Indians, between auxiliaries and camp servants, before Cortes returned from Spain.

The powers conceded to Cortes as Captain-General, and for the continuation of his explorations and discoveries, were so large, and so ill-defined, that they could hardly fail to conflict with those of the royal *audiencia,* and this came to pass immediately after his arrival at Vera Cruz on July 15, 1530. The Marques, as he was henceforward called, was accompanied by his wife and his mother, and was received upon landing with jubilation by Spaniards and Indians alike, who flocked in thousands from all parts to welcome him and to present their grievances for his adjustment. The new *audiencia* was not yet constituted, and the auditors, Matienzo and Delgadillo, sent strict orders to Vera Cruz that the people assembled there to honour Cortes should disperse to their homes, while to Cortes himself, who had meanwhile marched amidst ovations by the way of Tlascala to Texcoco, they delivered a prohibition to enter the capital. This order was in conformity with the instructions given him before leaving Spain,

so he was obliged to respect it and to establish himself at Texcoco until the arrival of the new *audiencia,* which took place in December of the same year, 1530. At the outset everything went well, and the new auditors rendered justice in several pending claims and took counsel with Cortes concerning affairs and the measures to be adopted. This promising state of things, however, was of brief duration, and, in their letter of February 22, 1531, to the Emperor they made complaints of his pretensions and mentioned, among other things, that the Bishops in reading the prayers for the King and royal family added after the words *cum prole regia "et duce exercitus nostri,"* and that they had corrected him for doing so.

Another of their letters, in August, 1532, complains of his great influence over the natives and of his using his powers as Captain-General to revenge himself on his enemies, adding, "He says he will resign the Captaincy General and return to Spain. Oh if he would only do it!"[1] The auditors at other times advised that he be called to Spain on some pretext,—the more so as he wanted to go.

The conquest finished, the Conqueror's occupation was gone. His proud spirit and active temperament could ill brook the checks of the *audiencia* and the limitations set to his enterprises by men who neither understood nor sym-

[1] Muñoz, tom. lxxix., fol. 118.

pathised with them. At one time he retired in disgust from the capital, intending to devote himself to the administration of the affairs of his vast marquisate of Oaxaca. In the picturesque town of Cuernavaca he had built himself a handsome palace and a large church, both of which are still standing, though in a lamentable state of advancing dilapidation. As a planter in Cuba he had already shown initiative and capacity, and he profited by his former experience to introduce successfully the sugar-cane, the silkworm culture, new breeds of the merino sheep, and various other kinds of cattle. Mills for the handling of raw products were established in various places, and these new industries with which Cortes endowed Mexico have continued to be among her chief sources of wealth. But this was insufficient to occupy his restless activities, which, by the news of events in Peru, and of the rich countries discovered in the South Sea and along the Gulf of California, were constantly excited to plan fresh enterprises. In May, 1532, he fitted out two vessels which sailed from Acapulco under command of his cousin Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, one of which, with the commander on board, was never heard of again, while the other reached Jalisco after many perils. The misfortunes of this expedition began with a mutiny.

Two years later (1534) he built two more vessels at Tehuantepec which he entrusted to

Hernando Grijalba and Diego de Bezerra de Mendoza (a relative) respectively, with Ortun Jimenez as pilot. The ships got separated the first night out and never saw one another again. The one commanded by Grijalba discovered a deserted island called Santo Tomé, somewhere off the point of Lower California, and returned thence to Tehuantepec; the fate of the other was tragical, for Bezerra was murdered in his sleep by the pilot Jimenez, who took command, and, after coasting along Jalisco, landed at the Bay of Santa Cruz where he, with twenty Spaniards, was killed by the natives. The remaining sailors got back to the port of Chiametla where Nuñez de Guzman, who was then in Jalisco, took possession of the vessel.

These two fruitless ventures decided Cortes to take command himself, and in 1536 he sent three ships from Tehuantepec to the port of Chiametla where he joined them, marching overland from Mexico. He regained possession of the ship which Guzman had seized from the sailors of Jimenez, refitted it and set out on his voyage, exploring the coast for some fifty leagues beyond Santa Cruz (or La Paz), during which trip he suffered innumerable hardships and lost many of his men from sickness. The news of his own death reached Mexico, and his wife sent two ships and a caravel to look for him and bring him back. His wife's letters, together with others from the royal *audiencia* and the

Viceroy, Don Antonio de Mendoza, urging his return as very necessary, decided him to abandon further explorations and, after leaving Francisco de Ulloa in California, he returned to Acapulco in the early part of 1537.

He sent three ships, the *Santa Agueda, La Trinidad,* and the *Santo Tomas,* back to Francisco de Ulloa in May of that same year, which, after some fruitless cruising about, returned to Acapulco, the whole venture having cost him some two hundred thousand ducats.[1] A royal *cedula,* dated April 1, 1539, from Saragossa, provided for the payment of this claim, but remained ineffective.[2]

Thus the only results obtained from these various undertakings were debts, and he complained that he had so many that he was obliged to raise money, even on his wife's jewels. He wrote in despair to the Emperor that it was easier to fight the Indians than to contend with his Majesty's officials, and after years of litigation, during which the royal authorities seemed to study how best to vex and circumvent him, and after the series of useless but costly expeditions in the Pacific, he started on his second journey to Spain, which was to be his last.

A very different reception from the former one awaited him, for the Emperor was coldly civil

[1] *Noticia Historica.* Lorenzana Cartas de Cortes, edition 1776.

[2] Alaman, *Dissertazione* v. Italian translation, 1859.

and the Court in consequence was colder. His constant complaints and demands for satisfaction fell upon deaf or weary ears, for Court favours usually reckon more with present than with past services, and there was nothing more to be obtained from Cortes, who was broken in health and no longer young. At this time, too, Spain was all aflame with excitement over the brilliant achievements of Pizarro in Peru, which eclipsed the familiar exploits in Mexico now grown stale.

He joined the unsuccessful expedition sent against Algiers in 1541, in which the ship on which he and his sons Martin and Luis sailed was wrecked, together with eleven galleys of Andrea Doria. They barely escaped with their lives, and the five famous emeralds, which constituted an important item in his fortune and which he always carried on his person, were lost.

The supreme slight of leaving him out of the council of war, summoned to consider the plan of the campaign, was at this time put upon him, and, to his boast that with his Mexican veterans he could take Algiers, one of the generals superciliously replied that fighting the Moors was different work from killing naked Indians. His situation became less and less worthy, and an anecdote, dramatically illustrating the depth to which he sunk, relates that after vain efforts to get a hearing from the Emperor, he thrust himself forward to the steps of the royal car-

riage where, upon perceiving him, the sovereign haughtily exclaimed, "And who are you?" To which Cortes proudly answered, "Sire, I am a man who has given your Majesty more provinces than you possessed cities." What happened next we are not told. If it were true, the incident would picture eloquently the degradation of the greatest captain of his age, forced to waylay his sovereign at his carriage steps like the meanest beggar. There is no evidence forthcoming, however, to show that any such dialogue was ever spoken. Those who have believed and repeated this story — and they are many—have done so on the sole authority of Voltaire, with whom it apparently originated.[1] He does not indicate from what source the information reached him. The scene as described seems to epitomise a very tragedy of disappointment and humiliation, so, despite the staring stamp of fiction it bears, it will doubtless continue to pass for history when less dramatic facts are consigned to forgetfulness.

The marriage arranged for his daughter with a son of the Marquis of Astorga was broken off, the bridegroom withdrawing because the full amount of the stipulated dowry was not forthcoming, and after this mortification, Cortes obtained permission to return to Mexico, travelling first to Seville, where he was accorded a public reception. His rapidly failing health made it

[1] *Essai sur les Mœurs*, cap. 147.

apparent that his end was approaching, and prompted him to withdraw for quiet to Castelleja de la Cuesta, a small town near Seville, where he died in the house of a magistrate, Juan Rodriguez, in the Calle Real, on the 2d of December, 1547, attended by his son Don Martin.

One of the most notable things in his last will is the mention of his doubts about the right of holding slaves. He admonished his eldest son to look well into the question, and if it should be decided by competent opinion that the practice was wrong, he must act in accordance with strict justice; meanwhile he must give great attention to the welfare and education of his people. He left a foundation and endowment fund for the hospital of Jesus (*la Concepcion*) in Mexico, and for a college and monastery at Coyohuacan, but the funds ran short and only the hospital was really established according to his intention. Masses were directed to be said at his father's tomb, and two thousand masses were provided for the souls of those who had fought with him in the conquest, a provision that cannot be considered in excess of their probable spiritual necessities.

In his will it was also provided that his body should be buried wherever he died for a period of ten years, at the expiration of which time it was to be taken to Mexico, to be there entombed in the monastery he had founded in

Coyohuacan; his remains were consequently first laid to rest with fitting ceremonies in the family chapel of the Dukes of Medina Sidonia, in the Church of San Isidro at Seville.

The following epitaph was composed by his son Martin:

Padre, cuya suerte impropiamente
Aqueste bajo mundo poseía,
Valor que nuestra edad enriquecía
Descansa ahora en paz, eternamente.[1]

There his body lay, until by order of his son Don Martin Cortes, second Marques del Valle, it was removed in 1562 to Mexico, but, contrary to the provisions in the will, the place of sepulture was chosen in the monastery of St. Francis in Texcoco, where his mother and one of his daughters were already buried.

In 1629 Don Pedro Cortes, fourth Marques del Valle, died in Mexico, and with his death the line of male descendants of Cortes came to an end.

It was decided between the Viceroy, the Marques de Serralbo, and the Archbishop of Mexico, D. Francisco Manso de Zuñiga, to transfer the body of the conqueror to the capital and bury it with that of his last descendant in the Church of St. Francis.

An elaborate funeral procession was organised, which set forth from the Cortes palace

[1] Andres Calvo, *Los Tres Siglos de Mexico.*

headed by all the religious associations and confraternities, carrying their respective banners, after which followed the civil tribunals. Next came the Archbishop accompanied by the cathedral chapter in full canonicals. The body of Don Pedro Cortes was exposed to view in an open coffin carried by Knights of the Chapter of Santiago, while the coffin of his great ancestor, covered with a black velvet pall, was borne by the royal judges, escorted by standard bearers carrying a white banner on which were embroidered the figures of the Blessed Virgin and St. John; another displaying the royal arms of Spain and a third of black velvet showing the arms of the Marques del Valle. Members of the university followed, and the procession closed with the Viceroy and all his court with an escort of soldiers carrying arms reversed and banners trailing. This funeral pageant—probably the most magnificent ever seen in the new world—advanced to the accompaniment of muffled drums and solemn chantings, halting at six different places for brief religious rites.

During more than a century and a half the bones of Cortes were left undisturbed, until in 1794 they were moved once more, and this time to the hospital of Jesus of Nazareth, which he had founded and endowed and in whose chapel a tomb was prepared to receive the body, which was coffined in a crystal case riveted with silver bars. Would that this change had been

the last, and that the pilgrimages of this poor body had ended within the walls its owner's piety had built.

During the period of unrest that followed immediately upon the establishment of Mexican independence, a design was said to have been formed by some "patriots" to rifle the tomb and scatter the conqueror's ashes to the winds, of which profanation the authorities were said to be aware; but seem to have been either unwilling or unable to prevent. Others contrived to forestall the threatened violation, and from 1823 the body of Cortes disappeared. Señor Garcia Icacbalceta wrote to Mr. Henry Harrisse upon the subject saying:

> The place of the present sepulture of Cortes is wrapped in mystery. Don Lucas Alaman has told the history of the remains of this great man. Without positively saying so, he lets it be understood that they were taken to Italy.
>
> It is generally believed that the bones of Cortes are in Palermo. But some persons insist that they are still in Mexico, hidden in some place absolutely unknown. Notwithstanding the friendship with which Señor Alaman has honoured me, I never could obtain from him a positive explanation; he would always find some pretext to change the conversation.

Señor Alaman's description of what occurred in 1823 is substantially as follows:

Early in the year 1822 discussions began in

the Mexican Congress, in which the project of destroying the monument in the hospital (of Jesus) chapel was mooted; in the month of August of that year, Father Mier, in the hope of forestalling the intended desecration, proposed that the monument should be transferred to the National Museum. The following year, 1823, was marked by the transport to the capital of the remains of the patriots who had proclaimed the independence of 1810, and certain newspapers published violent articles, inciting the people to celebrate this event by rifling the tomb of the conqueror, and burning his body at St. Lazaro. Fearing the execution of this threat, which would have left an indelible stain on the national honour, the Vicar-General directed the chaplain of the hospital to conceal the body in a secure place, and both Señor Alaman himself and Count Fernando Lucchesi, who represented the Duke of Terranova's interests in Mexico at that time, assisted at the temporary hiding away of the remains under the steps of the altar. The bust and arms of gilded bronze were sent to the Duke of Terranova in Palermo, and the dismantled monument remained in the chapel until 1833, when it also disappeared.[1]

Thus far Señor Alaman is as explicit as possible, but concerning the final resting place of

[1] Alaman, *Dissertazione* v. Italian translation by Pelaez, 1859.

the body he says nothing whatever on his own account, closing the subject by introducing a quotation from Dr. Mora (who, he says, was the first to publish these facts), which states that "afterwards the remains were sent to his family."

In the collaborated work published under the special direction of Don Vincente Riva Palacio, entitled *Mexico a Traves los Siglos,* it is stated in a note on page 353 of the second volume that the remains were sent to the Duke of Monteleone in Italy in 1823 (*"fueren rimitidos a Italia a la casa de los Duques de Monteleone"*). In the chapters of the fourth volume, which chronicle the events of the year 1823, no mention is made of this occurrence, which it would surely seem was of sufficient importance to merit notice.

If the remains of the conqueror were taken to Palermo or consigned to the family of the Dukes of Monteleone, there is no record of the transaction, nor is any tradition of it known, even by hearsay, to the present members of the family, or to the keepers of the family archives.

Not the least of the glories of the Pignatelli family, which has kept its place among the foremost of Sicily and Naples, is their descent from the Spanish conqueror of Mexico, and it seems inadmissible that the body of this illustrious ancestor should arrive at Palermo as recently as 1823, be buried nobody knows where, and no

record of any sort be kept of such an important and interesting event in the annals of the family. The absence, therefore, of any record, or even oral tradition, of such an event seems to be at least a negative proof that it never took place. It is quite thinkable that the custodians of the hospital chapel, where the body lay in 1823, should have invented and circulated the fiction of its transport out of the country to convince the intending desecrators that it had been put beyond their reach; meanwhile it was easy to hide the coffin in some secret place, doubtless within the walls of the hospital itself, where it may still lie in a forgotten grave. The legend of the transport to Italy and the burial in Palermo being thus started and doubtless diligently spread with a purpose, encountered no contradiction, and, with the death of the necessarily few persons who possessed the secret, all knowledge of the facts was lost, while the invention passed from legend into history, and has been commonly accepted and quoted.

The Republic of Mexico has emerged from its period of infancy, and has successfully survived the trials, and perilous struggles, which all new nations must traverse to reach the state of permanent and prosperous peace, indispensable to national greatness. The four hundredth anniversary of the discovery and conquest, which looms in sight, will find her in the foremost ranks of the republics of the New World, and these great

events will doubtless be commemorated by becoming celebrations, which shall suitably revive the memory of the great conqueror, and his intrepid allies of Tlascala. If there be any clue or trace by which the body of Cortes can be found, it should be diligently followed up, until the remains are recovered and restored to the place of honour in the national pantheon.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MAN

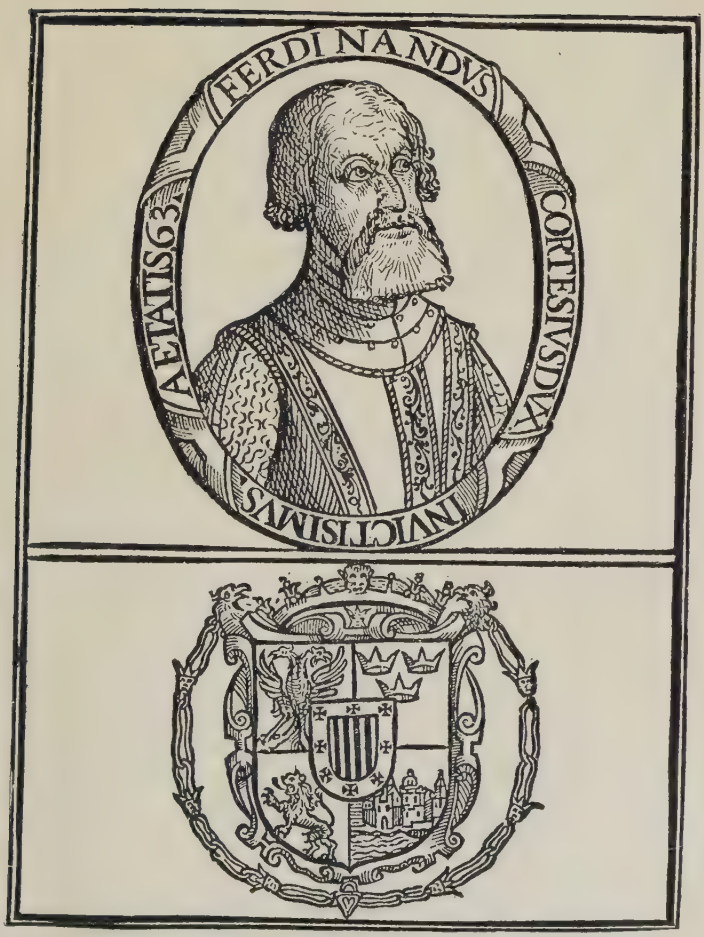
Appearance and Habits of Cortes—Comparison with Cæsar—His Piety—Alleged Cruelty—His Morals—Judgment of Slavery—Conclusion

FERNANDO CORTES was a man of medium height, deep chested and slender limbed; his complexion was rather pale, and his expression was serious—even sad, though the glance of his eyes, which in repose were impenetrable, could be kindly and responsive. His hair and beard were dark and rather scanty.

Trained from his youth to the exercise of arms, he was a most dexterous swordsman, very light on his feet, and at home in the saddle.

His speech was calm, nor did he ever use oaths or strong language, nor give way to exhibitions of temper, though a mounting flush and the swelling veins of his forehead betrayed his mastered passion, when he was vexed, while a characteristic gesture of annoyance or impatience was the casting aside of his cloak.

He dressed with exquisite care and great sobriety, eschewing any excess of ornament. One splendid jewel adorned his hand, a gold medal of the Blessed Virgin, with St. John on the reverse, hung from a finely wrought gold



CORTES AND HIS ARMS

FROM VEGA'S "CORTES VALEROSO" (1588)

chain around his neck, and just under the feathers of his cap was also a gold medal; these were his only ornaments. He had some knowledge of Latin, and many of the psalms, hymns, and parts of the Church liturgy, which he knew by heart, he was fond of reciting.

Though careless of his food, he was a great eater, but moderate in drinking and no one could better withstand privations than he, as was constantly shown on his long marches. His chief relaxation was games of chance, in which he indulged habitually, but dispassionately, making either his winnings or losses a subject for jokes and laughter. When strict laws were enacted suppressing gambling in Mexico, his enemies alleged that he himself violated the law, and that the tables and cards were always ready in his own house.

The absence, or control of impulse in Cortes saved him from many a disaster which daring alone would have brought upon a leader of equal boldness but less wisdom, placed as he was. Perhaps the most supremely audacious act which history records is the seizure of Montezuma in the midst of his own court, and his conveyance to the Spanish quarters; an undertaking so stupefying in its conception and so incredible in its execution that only the multitude and unanimity of testimony serve to remove it from the sphere of fable into that of history. This, however, was not an act of mere

daring, but, as he explains to the Emperor in his second letter, a measure of carefully pondered policy.

The strength, also, of his position invariably lay in the identity of his ambitions with the interests of the crown; he was always right. By no other conceivable policy could he have accomplished what he did. The men whom Velasquez, in his helpless rage, sent to supersede or overthrow him, were mere playthings for his far-seeing statecraft and his overpowering will. The story of these events appears in all its wonderful simplicity and astounding significance, told in his own words in his letters to Charles V., which have been compared with the *Commentaries* of Cæsar on his campaigns in Gaul, without suffering by the comparison.

Gaul, when overrun and conquered by Julius Cæsar, possessed no such political organisation as did the Aztec Empire when it was subdued by Cortes. There were neither cities comparable with Tlascala and Cholula, nor was there any central military organisation corresponding to the triple alliance of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan, with their vast dependencies, from which countless hordes of warriors were drawn. On the other hand, while Cæsar led the flower of the Roman legions, Cortes captained a mixed band of a few hundred men, ill-trained, undisciplined, indifferent to schemes of conquest and

bent only on their own individual aggrandisement; of whom many were also disaffected towards the commanders and required alternate cajoling and threats to hold them in hand. The very men who were sent under Narvaez to depose him and bring him back in chains to Cuba, deserted their commander and remained in Mexico, fighting under his victorious banner. The mission of Cristobal de Tapia and its inglorious failure illustrate the deplorable conflict of authorities which rendered the Spanish colonial administration of that time almost farcical. The confusion and uncertainty prevailing in the direction of colonial affairs left many loopholes of escape for all who wished to disregard unpalatable orders.

The foundations of a liberal and independent colonial administration already existed in Mexico, on which a stable system of government might have been built up, but unfortunately these principles, which were better known to Spaniards in that century than to any other continental people, were in their decadence. Under Charles V., began the disintegration of the people's liberties, which affected likewise the government of all the dependencies, and the system of rule by Viceroys and a horde of rapacious bureaucrats was initiated, which lasted in Latin-America until the last Spanish colony disappeared with the proclamation of Cuba's independence.

Cortes was a man of unfeigned piety, of the stuff of which martyrs are made; nor did his conviction that he was leading a holy crusade to win lost souls to salvation ever waver. He says in his *Ordenanzas* at Tlascala that, were the war carried on for any other motive than to overthrow idolatry and to secure the salvation of so many souls by converting the Indians to the holy faith, it would be unjust and obnoxious, nor would the Emperor be justified in rewarding those who took part in it.

Among other ordinances governing the moral and religious welfare of the people in Mexico after the conquest, was one which prescribed, under pain of stripes, attendance at the instructions in Christian doctrine, given on Sundays and feast days. The Jesuit historian Cavo [1] says that on one occasion, when Cortes had himself been absent, he was reprimanded from the pulpit on the following Sunday, and, to the stupefaction of the Indians, submitted to the prescribed flogging in public. He resembled the publican who struck his breast and invoked mercy for his sins, rather than the Pharisee who found his chief cause for thankfulness in the contemplation of his own superior virtues. Prescott was uncertain whether this submission to a public whipping should be attributed to "bigotry" or to "policy." It seems to have been first of all an act of simple consistency,

[1] *Los Tres Siglos de Mexico*, tom. i., p. 151.

by which the commander sanctioned the law he had himself established. Precept is ever plentiful but example is the better teacher, and a more striking and unforgetable example of the equality of all under the law, it would indeed be difficult to find in history.

His religious zeal was sometimes intemperate, nor was it always guided by prudence, but he usually showed wisdom in submitting to the restraining influence of some handy friar, whose saner and more persuasive methods promised surer results than his own strenuous system of conversion would have secured. The restraints the commander placed on the license of his soldiers might well have been prompted by his policy of winning the friendly confidence of the Indians, but his measures for repressing profanity of every sort, gambling and other camp vices, and his insistence upon daily mass, prayer before, and thanksgivings after battle, are traceable to no such motive, and it is more than once recorded that the Indians were profoundly impressed by the decorous solemnity of the religious ceremonies they witnessed and the devotion shown by the Spaniards.

Shortcomings in the practice of the moral precepts of religion, either in that century or in this, are not confined to men who find themselves cut adrift from the usual restraints of civilised society, isolated and paramount amidst barbarians, whose inferior moral standard pro-

vides constant and easy temptations to lapse; and, while it were as difficult as it is unnecessary to attempt a defence of the excesses which the Spaniards undoubtedly committed in Mexico, it is equally impossible to condemn them as exceptional. Prescott acquits Cortes of the imputation of insincerity, and declares that no one who reads his correspondence, or studies the events of his career, can doubt that he would have been the first to lay down his life for the faith.

To the scoffing philosopher of the eighteenth century, these crusading buccaneers in whose characters the mystic and the sensualist fought for the mastery seemed but knaves, clumsily masquerading as fools. The fierce piety, which furnished entertainment to the age of Voltaire, somewhat puzzles our own. Expeditions now set forth into dark continents unburdened with professions of concern for the spiritual or moral welfare of the natives. Indeed, nothing is deemed more foolish than attempts to interfere with the religious beliefs and practices of barbarians, and the commander in our times who would overturn an idol merely to set up a wooden cross, thereby exposing his followers to the risk of being massacred, would be court-martialled and degraded, if, indeed, he ventured to return to civilisation.

The accusation of cruelty, too lightly brought against Cortes, has been diligently propagated

by the interested and complacently accepted by the indiscriminating, until dissent from it awakens incredulous surprise. Nevertheless, all that can be learned of his character proves that he was not by nature cruel, nor did he take wanton pleasure in the sufferings of others. Conciliation and coercion were both amongst his weapons, his natural preference being for the former, as is seen by his never once failing, in his dealings with the Indians, to exhaust peaceful methods before resorting to force. The secret of carrying on a war of conquest mercifully has not yet been discovered, and recent reports from Africa and the Philippines do not show much advance on the policy of the Spaniards in Mexico four hundred years ago, though it cannot be pretended that our modern expeditions are attended by the perils, known, and most of all unknown, which awaited the ignorant adventurers in the New World at every turn.

There were three ends which, according to the ethics of Cortes, justified any measures for their accomplishment, 1st, the spread of the faith, 2d, the subjugation of the Indians to Spanish rule, and 3d, the possession of their treasures; and as the narrative of the conquest unfolds itself, it is seen that his resolution stopped at nothing for the achievement of these ends. But there is no instance of tortures and suffering being treated by him as a sport.

Whether he might not have accomplished all he did with less bloodshed, is a purely speculative question. Acosta [1] states that so entirely were the Mexicans imbued with the belief that the Spaniards came in fulfilment of the prophecy of their most beneficent deity, Quetzalcoatl, that Montezuma would have abdicated and the whole empire have passed into their hands without a struggle, had Cortes but comprehended the force of the prevailing superstition and met the popular expectation by rising consistently to his *rôle* of demigod. There are facts which tend to lend weight to this argument, and had Cortes but realised the possibilities, he might have been equal to the part, though his followers fell so lamentably short that it is doubtful if the illusion could have been long sustained. As it was, the awful tragedy of the *Sorrowful Night,* and the downfall, amidst bloodshed and suffering unspeakable, of Mexico, was precipitated by the brutal folly of Alvarado,—not of Cortes.[2]

In his relations with women, Cortes reveals a primitive, polygamous temperament. Even at the age of sixteen in his native Medellin, we find him falling from a wall and all but losing his life in an amorous adventure with an anony-

[1] *Historia de las Indias,* lib. vii., cap. xxv.

[2] One of the greatest blunders of judgment recorded of Cortes, is his selection of the impetuous Alvarado for such a delicate command.

mous fair one, and throughout his life these intrigues succeeded one another unbrokenly; but his loves were so entirely things "of his life apart," that their influence upon his motives or his actions is never discernible. He belonged to the type of universal lover on whom women exert no influence. In Cuba his *rôle* of Don Juan brought him into a conflict with the Governor, which was the origin of their life-long duel for supremacy in the colonies. But Catalina Xuarez, about whom the trouble first began, is quickly lost sight of; she passes like a pale shade across that epoch of her husband's existence and is never heard of again, until her uninvited presence in Mexico, followed quickly by her unlamented death, is briefly mentioned. The most important woman in his life was his Indian interpreter, Marina, and some writers have sought to weave a romance into the story of their relations, for which there seems, upon examination, to be little enough substantial material. During the period when she was indispensable to the business in hand, she was never separated from Cortes, but we know that he was not faithful to her even then, while, as soon as she ceased to be necessary, she was got rid of as easily as she had been acquired.

Montezuma gave him his daughter, who first received Christian baptism to render her worthy of the commander's companionship and was known as Doña Ana. She lived openly with

Cortes in his quarters, and had her two sisters, Inez and Elvira with her, and a sister of the King of Texcoco who was called Doña Francisca. Doña Ana was killed during the retreat on the *Sorrowful Night,* and was pregnant at the time. A fourth daughter of the Emperor, Doña Isabel, married Alonso de Grado, who shortly afterwards died, when she also passed into the household of the conqueror, to whom she bore a daughter.[1] According to Juan Tirado, two of Montezuma's daughters bore sons to Cortes, and one bore a daughter.[2]

In his last will, Cortes mentions another natural daughter, whose mother was Leonor Pizarro, who afterwards married Juan de Saucedo.

It is thus positively known that besides Marina there were four other ladies who shared in his affections during this period of the conquest, and meanwhile his first wife Catalina Xuarez la Marcaida was alive in Cuba. These undisguised philanderings must have somewhat blighted Marina's romance.

His marriage with Doña Juana de Zuñiga took place when he was at the zenith of his fame. The advantages such an alliance with a noble and powerful family of Castile seemed to

[1] Bernal Diaz, cap. cvii.; Bernaldino Vasquez de Tapia, tom. ii., pp. 244, 305–306; Gonzalo Mejia, tom. ii., pp. 240–241.

[2] Orozco y Berra, *Conquisto de Mexico,* lib. ii., cap. vi., note.

promise, though many, were perhaps not as tangible as the ambitious conqueror had hoped. The marriage was negotiated before he and the lady had met, but it does not appear to have been less happy for this conformity to a custom which at that time was universal in noble families. Doña Juana could have seen but little of her restless husband, who was perpetually engaged elsewhere, but she was a good wife and loved him, just as did Catalina Xuarez and all his mistresses, while his uxorious instincts made it easy for him to be equally happy with each of them. He was affectionate and tender, devoted to all of his children, distinguishing but little between his legitimate and his natural offspring in a truly patriachal fashion. For the latter he secured Bulls of legitimacy from the Pope, and provided generously in his will. Not less strong was his filial piety, and among the first treasure sent to Spain, there went gifts to his father and mother in Medellin, and, after his father's death, he brought his mother to Mexico where she died and was buried in the vault at Texcoco, where his own body was afterwards laid.

His undertakings subsequent to the fall of Mexico called for the exercise of qualities hardly less remarkable, though of a different order, and it was absence of productive success which has caused them to be overlooked in a world where results count for more than effort.

It was never the policy of the Spanish crown to entrust the government of dependencies to their discoverers or conquerors, and when powerful friends at court sought in 1529 to prevail upon Charles V. to grant Cortes supreme power in Mexico, under the crown, his Majesty was not to be persuaded; and in refusing he pointed out that his royal predecessors had never done this, even in the case of Columbus, or of Gonsalvo de Cordoba, the conqueror of Naples. Had it been possible, however, for the Emperor to free himself from the suspicions fomented by the persistent intrigues of the enemies of Cortes, especially from the jealous fear of a possible aspiration to independent sovereignty, it cannot be doubted that the wisest thing, both for Mexico and for the royal interests, would have been the installation of Cortes in as independent a vice-royalty as was compatible with the maintenance of the royal supremacy. While Cortes, in common with all his kind, loved gold, he was not a mere vulgar plunderer, seeking to hastily enrich himself, at no matter what cost to the country, in order to retire to a life of luxury in Spain. Moreover, even granting that he had started with no larger purpose, it is plain that he was himself at the outset unconscious, both of his own powers and of the strange drama about to unfold, in which destiny reserved him the first part. By the time the conquest was completed, his know-

ledge of the possibilities of Mexico had so expanded, that his views on all questions connected with the occupation, the government, and the future welfare of the country had developed from the hazardous schemes of a mere adventurer into the matured policy of a statesman. The constantly revived accusation of aspiring to independent sovereignty was a myth, for the Emperor had no more faithful subject than Cortes, in whom the dual mainsprings of action were religion and loyalty.

His better judgment condemned the system of *encomiendas* and only admitted slavery as a form of punishment for the crime of rebellion, even then to be mitigated by every possible safeguard. Far from driving the natives from their homes or wishing to deport them to the islands, he used every inducement to encourage them to remain in their towns, to rebuild their cities, and resume their industries, realising full well that the true strength of government, as well as the surest source of revenue, lay in a pacific and busy population. To this end he adopted the system of restoring or maintaining the native chiefs in their jurisdiction and dignity, imposing upon them the obligation of ruling their tribes,—and persuading those who had been frightened away to the mountains to return to their villages. The exceptions to this policy were in the cases of certain rebellious princes,

whom he considered powerful enough to be dangerous.

That he understood the Indians and had a kindly feeling for them, is proven many times over, while the proofs of their affection for him are even more numerous. *Malintzin* was a name to conjure with amongst them, and while familiar relations with most of the other Spaniards speedily bred contempt, their attachment to Cortes increased as time went on. The iron policy which used massacres, torture, and slavery for its instruments of conquest did not revolt the Indians, since it presented no contrast to the usage common among themselves in time of war; *væ victis* comprised the ethics of native kings who, in addition to wars for aggrandisement of territory and increase of glory, also waged them solely to obtain victims for the sacrificial altars of their gods. This ghastly levy ceased with the introduction of Malintzin's religion, and he brought no hitherto unfamiliar horror as a substitute for it.

Except the independent Tlascalans, all the other peoples of Anáhuac were held in stern subjection by the Aztec Emperor; heavy taxes were collected from them, human life was without value, torture was in common use; their sons were seized for sacrifice, their daughters replenished the harems of the confederated kings and great nobles, so that Cortes was welcomed as the liberator of subject peoples, the

redresser of wrongs. He had procured them the sweets of a long nourished, but despaired of, vengeance, and, though it was but the exchange of one master for another, they tasted the satisfaction of having squared some old scores with their oppressors. The conquest completed, Cortes bent all his efforts to creating systems of government under which the different peoples might live and prosper in common security, and, with the disappearance of the need for them, the harsher methods also vanished. Few of his cherished intentions were realised, however, and the power which would have enabled him to bring his wiser plans to fruition was denied him.

The fruits of conquest are bitterness of spirit and disappointment, though Cortes fared better than his great contemporaries Columbus, Balboa, and Pizarro, who, after discovering continents and oceans and subduing empires, were requited with chains, the scaffold, and the traitor's dagger. True, he saw himself defrauded of his deserts, while royal promises were found to be elastic; and in his last years he was even treated as an importunate suppliant, being excluded from the presence of the sovereign to whose crown he had given an empire.

Lesser men would have been content with the world-wide fame, the great title and vast estates to which, from modest beginnings, Cortes had risen in a few brief years, but a lesser man

would never have accomplished such vast undertakings, and it was his curse that his ambition kept pace with his achievements. From the fall of Mexico until his death, his life was a series of disappointments, unfulfilled ambitions, and petty miseries, due to the malice of rivals and the faithlessness of friends, relieved only by some brief periods of splendid triumph, illumined by royal favour.

In reviewing his career, the quality that most conspicuously shines forth and most imperatively commands our unqualified admiration is his genius for leadership. With inadequate means, he undertook and successfully accomplished one of the greatest military enterprises of which we have knowledge. If we but consider the inharmonious elements composing his forces, we may in some measure realise the immense and resistless power of his gift of command over others. To the motley collection of gentlemen adventurers, gold-seekers, piratical sailors, and amnestied criminals who composed his force, he added hordes of savage allies drawn from tribes divided by generations of blood-feud, and it was over such warring elements that he exercised a masterful leadership in which he blended astute elasticity with inflexible firmness. Bravery, constancy, and patience are numbered among his virtues; an opportunist in veracity, he was neither more nor less unscrupulous in his statecraft than were the opponents whom

ARMOUR OF CORTES

AFTER AN ENGRAVING, FROM THE ORIGINAL IN THE MUSEUM AT MADRID

he encountered and defeated in the game of diplomacy.

Great feats of arms are only accomplished at the cost of infinite suffering and much bloodshed, involving whole nations, and the fame of military heroes is commensurate with the magnitude of the devastation they accomplish. It is, therefore, within the boundaries of permissible evil that we must keep, in judging these scourges of humanity who, from time to time, discharge their mysterious mission amidst the tears and lamentations of the innocent, upon whom the horrors of war fall most heavily. Wars of invasion, however unjust in principle and desolating in their effects, may be waged by methods and for ends that compel our ultimate approval, however much our humane sentiments may deplore their beginnings.

Judged by the moral standard of his times, the religious and patriotic motives that swayed Cortes, blended though they were with personal ambition and greed, sanctified the end for which he fought; judged by the military standard of that age, he conducted his conquest by such means as the rules of warfare sanctioned. Greatest, by far, of all the Spanish conquerors who baptised the New World with blood, the legend on his emerald cup might well serve as the epitaph of Fernando Cortes:

Inter natos mulierum
Non surrexit major.

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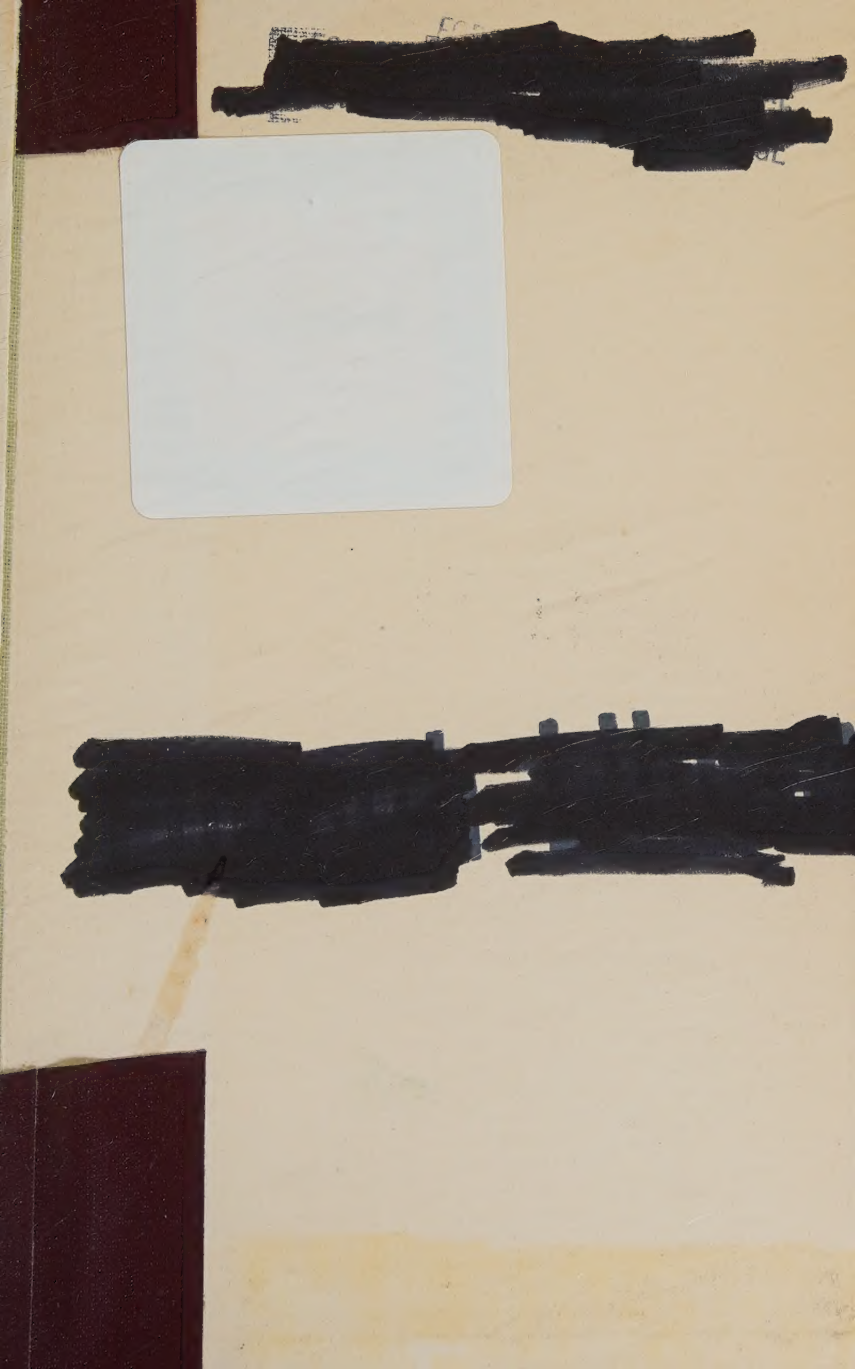

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